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**UP
FRONT****X-CELLENT PROSPECTS**

Will lightning strike twice? Will X-MEN #1 break the sales record set by SPIDER-MAN #1?

Everyone in comics is betting on it — from Marvel right on through the distributors to the retailers, readers and collectors.

And from all early indications, it looks as if it's a sure bet. Consequently, there's a lot of free-floating aggression in the form of envy and resentment among the also-rans and those who should know better.

To put it another way, folks who might not today have a direct sales market or a comics industry to work within are blaming the success of others for their own shortcomings and failures.

When I started scripting comics in the early '70s, it was common wisdom among industry insiders that sales would continue to dwindle and that by the end of the decade the majors would resort to reprinting the adventures of their most well-known characters. Now that sales are heading in the opposite direction and comics enjoys an all-time high in prestige among those in the "real world," some people are still bemoaning the death of the industry — this time in terms of aesthetics instead of economics.

Are they right? Probably no more so than those early hand-wringers and doomsayers.

~David

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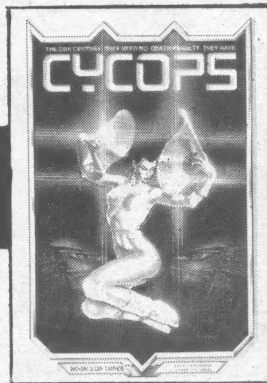
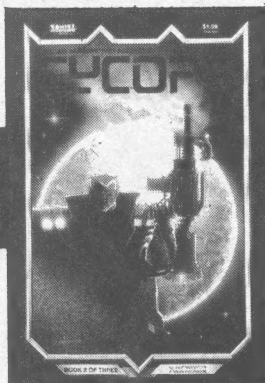
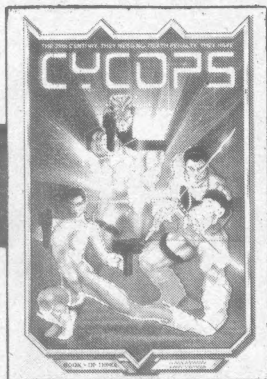
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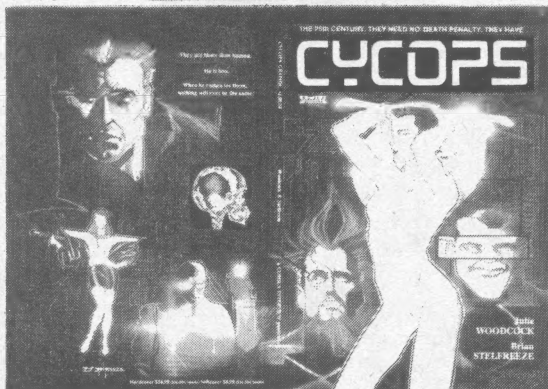


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"I've been doing three books a month for the last 15 years."

Here and throughout this interview: artwork by the X-Men's premier penciller, Jim Lee.



Chris Claremont has been writing *UNCANNY X-MEN* for Marvel Comics for more than 16 years; "longer than most of my audience has been alive," as Chris puts it.

Now that incredible tenure takes on a new shape, as Marvel's premiere mutant team splits in two, becoming *UNCANNY X-MEN* and, simply, *X-MEN*. Chris and I began our discussion of the new state of mutant affairs by examining its effect on his workload.

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: A while ago, when I talked to you for *COMICS*

SCENE, you said part of the reason you had dropped writing *EXCALIBUR* was that you simply didn't have time for it. Now, you're writing two issues of *X-MEN* a month...

CHRIS CLAREMONT: Actually, that's not altogether correct. Part of the reason I dropped *EXCALIBUR* was that *X-MEN* was on the horizon and we

CHRIS CLAREMONT

"Portacio and Lee are totally different people, totally

wanted to start the new book in somewhat less than the extreme deadline situation we always seemed to find ourselves in on *UNCANNY X-MEN*.

Also, at the time, I felt *EXCALIBUR* wasn't any fun anymore. It had gotten to the point where there was no positive synergistic mix between myself and the

people I was working with as pencillers. Rather than perpetuating a book that wasn't zinging, it was easier to just remove myself from the situation and focus my energies on *X-MEN*.

I've been doing three books a month, on average, for the last 15 years. It's not a question of too much work; it was just a

question of how energies can best be focused. And in that instance, it was basically *X-MEN*.

PAT: *Looking at the two X-Men titles now, are we going to see them as fairly tightly tied in continuity — or will they pretty much each go their own way?*

CHRIS: My intention, from the start, was that they go — to a degree — their own way. What you're seeing, in a sense, is the adventures of eight or ten people who happen to live in the same house. In certain respects, their lives will intermingle: Things that happen to one team will affect the other team, simply because that's where they all live, where they all hang out. This is the center of their being, in the same way that; if you pick eight people who work at Marvel Comics — they may live and their lives may have focuses that are totally outside the office, but the office is the place where they all meet. I'm viewing this as an ensemble, somewhat like *HILL STREET BLUES*, *L.A. LAW*, *NORTHERN EXPOSURE*, anything like that.

But the fact that **Whilce Portacio** and **Jim Lee** are totally different people, totally different artists with surprisingly different styles, means that the books couldn't help but go in different directions. Jim's interests aren't Whilce's and vice versa. The way I would interact as a writer with Jim would not be the way I would interact with Whilce. Therefore, in tone, in direction, in emphasis, the books couldn't help but go in different directions, even though they might be similar.

That doesn't preclude storylines, plotlines, situations that do intermingle — but I think, for myself, I would prefer a situation where you have two independent but strong books, as opposed to what some people envisioned as one bi-weekly title.

PAT: *Do you see one or the other as the lead title?*

CHRIS: No. The way we refer to it is "the blue team" and "the gold team." Pulling the image from nuclear submarines, but realizing after the fact that we had described the teams' basic colors.

One book will have a certain leg up, simply because it's a first issue, but that's why — in a sense — we broke the teams up. Some of the *X-Factor* characters went to one book, some went to another; Scott's in one, Jean's in the other; Storm's in one, Wolverine's in the other. We tried to create a mix that would leave each book with strengths all its own, and attractions for the reader all its own. In conception, in attitude, in focus, they



different artists with surprisingly different styles."

were meant to be equal.

PAT: *Did you look at the groupings to try to create new conflicts, new synergies among these characters?*

CHRIS: Definitely new synergies. People's assumptions were, "Scott and Jean will be together; Storm and Wolverine will be together; X-Factor will be together." We wanted to attack that head-on.

The point of this is that all of them — Scott, Jean, Angel, Iceman, Beast, Wolverine, Storm, blah, blah, blah — are *all* X-Men. They all come out of the school;

they are all a part of the first two generations of Xavier's dream. It doesn't matter whether they call themselves X-Factor, X-Men, X-traordinary — call it what you like — they are all, at heart, X-Men. That allowed a certain freedom of action to break the old patterns and challenge some old assumptions. What *would* happen if Scott and Jean were on different teams? What would happen if we had some of the X-Factor people on one and some of the X-Men on the other — but a mix? And we wanted to see if we could create a new synergy in terms of

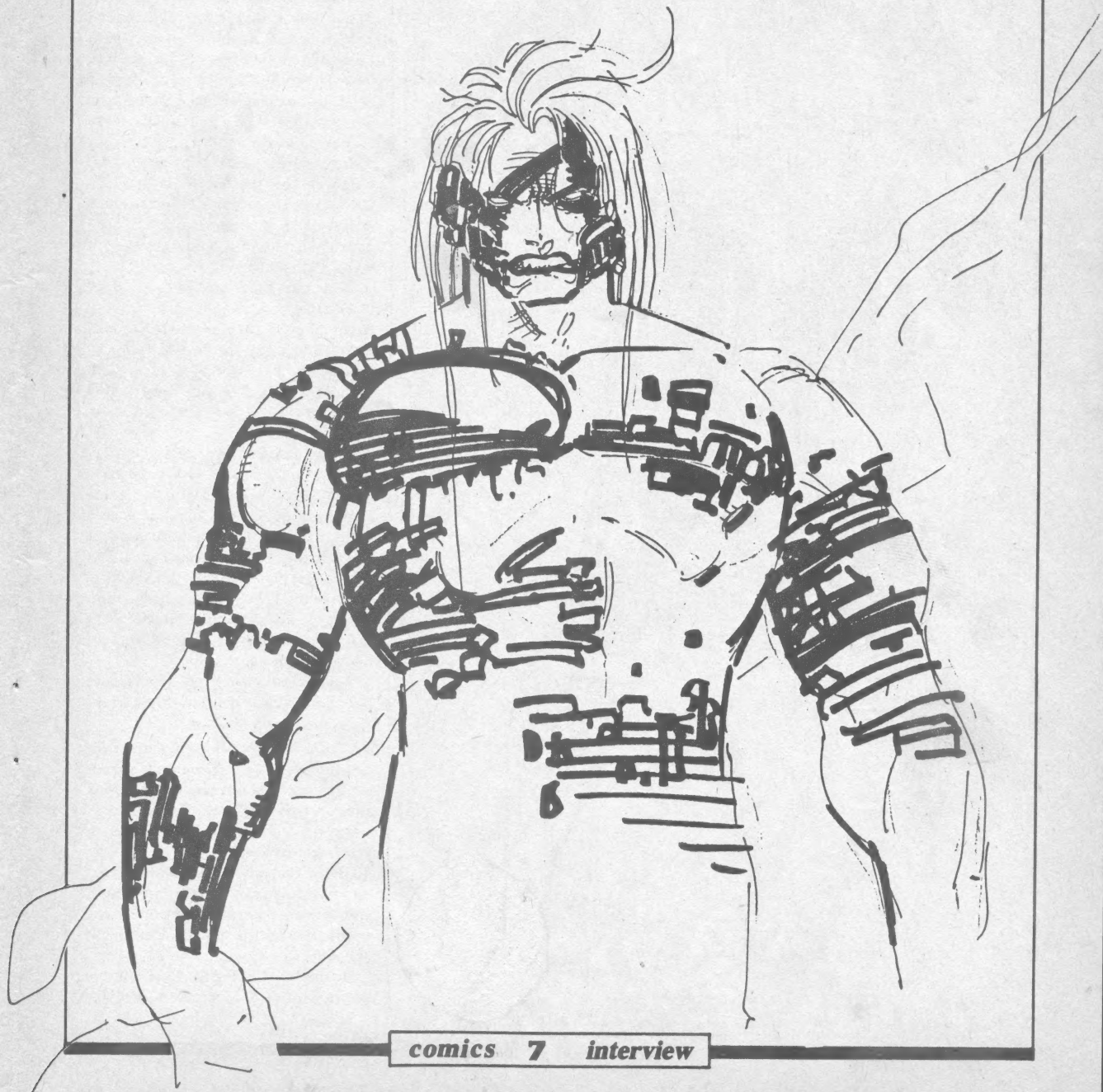
character.

As an example, the way it turned out, the UNCANNY team — Jean, Storm, Iceman, Archangel, Colossus — to a certain extent are all spoken for. They all have sweeties, including Storm, if you count Forge. Whereas the X-MEN team is a lot more solo.

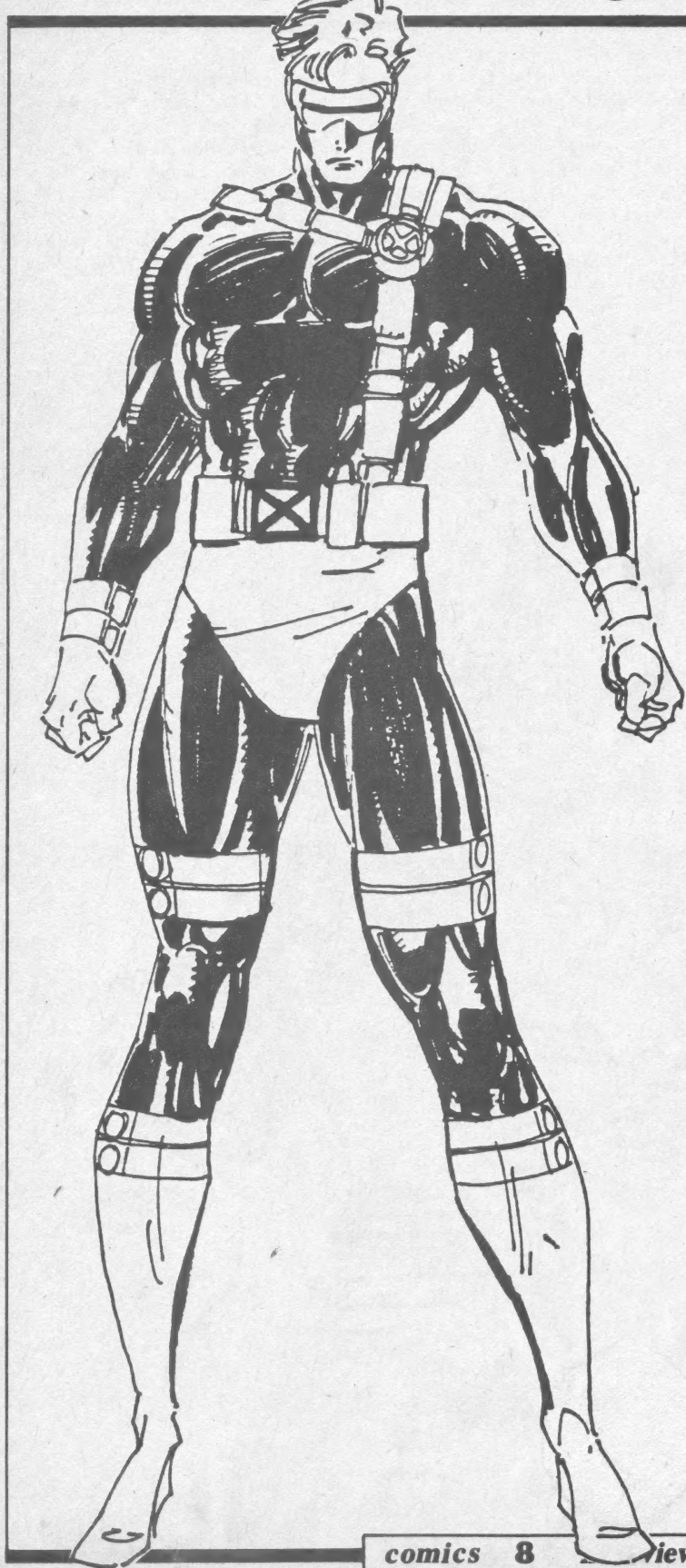
PAT: *Let me throw out some ideas that occurred to me as I looked at the line-ups and see if they occurred to you.*

Storm is the field leader of the UNCANNY team —

CHRIS: At this point.



"We're talking about introducing a sixth character to the



PAT: *At this point. Am I correct in perceiving a possible conflict as the three members of the original senior team will look on this and say, "Hey, we have umpty-ump years more experience than you — why are you in charge?"*

CHRIS: That's hard to say — predicting plotlines, since they arrive as a synergy among the writer, the penciller and editor — not necessarily in that order — is difficult. You have to take whatever I say with a grain of salt.

In my own visualization, these are people who have known each other for a long time. The fact is, the new team has been around longer than the old team was, before it disbanded. The original X-Men had 69 issues, the new X-Men have been around nearly three times as long. They have also all worked together as teams before. Archangel, Iceman, Beast, have all been a part of the X-Men at one time or another; Cyclops, of course. If there were a change or evolution in the leadership of the UNCANNY team, it wouldn't grow so much out of, "Well, we're the senior team; we're gonna pull rank," as it would grow out of who's best for the job.

These aren't kids anymore, to a large extent; they're grown-up, they're experienced, they've been through the mill. I would hope that they would approach a question like this in a rational, adult manner. Doesn't mean they won't challenge the status quo; doesn't mean they will.

Storm has serious doubts about her capacity to lead. Jean is very much a natural in that regard. Iceman is an unknown quantity. Colossus doesn't really drift in that direction. Archangel's a possibility, but — if you'll excuse an inadvertent pun — he's a little too flighty, too psychotic. We're talking about introducing a brand new sixth character to the team, but at this point, nothing's been defined about him.

Again — how things are the first issue does not necessarily mean they'll be the same six months down the line.

PAT: *On the other side, Wolverine has never impressed me as a natural follower, always seems to be challenging authority; Cyclops has never seemed to be someone who takes those kinds of challenges very well —*

CHRIS: That whole magilla was settled almost a decade ago. I did a whole arc of stories where Scott and Wolverine butted heads and butted heads. They finally sorted it out.

It's not that Wolverine is a follower or not; he works *with* people. Scott and

team. But at this point, nothing's been defined *about him.*"

Storm are, if you view this as a military company, the captains; Wolverine is Sgt. Rock. (*Laughter.*) He is not a conceptual strategist. He's the kind of person who can look at a firefight and know how to win it, but he can't take the two steps back and look at the firefight in relation to the entire battle. He's just too focussed on the moment. In that context, he is not a ferociously abstract person, whereas Scott and Storm are far more abstract and Jean is probably the most abstract of all.

Wolverine works with people out of respect for their abilities. He's a man who *does* know his limitations; there are certain things that Scott is better at than he is, therefore he will defer to Scott in those regards. Doesn't mean he won't give him a hard time — because Wolverine's way of keeping people on their toes is to needle them, to challenge them every step of the way. If Scott were to prove himself unworthy of being the leader, then Wolverine might take him down — not because he has any serious animosity toward Scott, but just because it's better for the team.

That, in a sense, is why Wolverine went after Phoenix back in UNCANNY X-MEN #214 — it wasn't that he had any animosity toward Rachel. He made a cold-blooded decision that, if she were going to turn into Dark Phoenix like her mom, it would be better to sign her off here and now than go through that whole mess all over again. Given the same choice with Jean, he might make the same decision.

That's why he sort of cold-bloodedly took Jubilee along with him when he set out to find the other X-Men. He knew they were alive, he had to find them and bring the team back together, one way or another. In the conception at the time, the storyline I was running, Wolverine was dying and he saw this as his farewell to arms. He was tying up all the loose ends of his life, he was restoring the balance, paying debts. His way of doing that was bringing the X-Men back together . . . whether they wanted it or not.

PAT: *You brought this up: What has happened to Jubilee?*

CHRIS: Bob Harras basically thought that she was not a viable contribution to the team mix. His feeling was that, by focussing a lot of attention and energy on a new kid character, it functioned to take a step or two away from the established characters. He wanted to restore the focus more tightly, more completely on them, so he decided to shunt Jubilee into



"The stories I did with Byrne were different from the



stories I did with Cockrum or Smith or Silvestri or Jim."

the background for a while, the better to focus on the active teams at this time.

The same sort of thing is probably going to happen to Forge and Banshee — they'll be there but they'll be background characters, like Jarvis in **THE AVENGERS**.

PAT: *I was going to say, it sounds like Forge becomes a sort of headquarters type.*

CHRIS: At this point, I believe that's the role being cast for him.

But again, all this is subject to change, depending on how the issues evolve.

PAT: *Since, as you say, the books will travel somewhat different paths, how would you put into words what the differences will be?*

CHRIS: It's very hard at this point because that would be a function of the writer and penciller working together.

It would be a matter of how Whilce, for example, would approach the story, what characters he prefers, what kinds of stories he would like to tell. Whilce is more science-fictional oriented than Jim is, therefore the stories could, conceivably, focus in a more purely science-

fictional approach; whereas Jim would have a different approach.

It relates to tone, perhaps, more than substance — and that's something that evolves over time. The kinds of stories I did with **John Byrne** were different from the stories I did with **Dave Cockrum**, both before and after John — which were different from the stories I did with **John Romita, Jr.** or **Paul Smith** or **Marc Silvestri** or even Jim.

Who you work with dramatically changes what you do and how you do it. The classic case in point is the first 24



"DeFalco's vision of the new X-MEN book was to have



issues of EXCALIBUR. The stories I did with **Alan Davis** versus the stories I did with **Chris Wozniak** or **Marshall Rogers** or **Rick Leonardi** or even **Barry Smith**. Each of those stories, done with Alan, would have worked really well. "The Girls' School from Hell" would have worked really well with Alan; I thought, when we set out to do it, that it would work as well with **Ron Wagner**, based on the work I saw on NTH MAN — it just didn't work. What I was looking for, what **Terry Kavanagh** and I were hoping for, didn't gel. It's no fault of Ron's, it's no fault of ours; it's just one of those things.

There was a story done in X-MEN years ago — the Power Pack crossover

that JR did. We discovered after the fact that JR *hates* drawing kids. (Laughter.); this is before the Brat Pack in DAREDEVIL. He was not comfortable drawing these kids — and if we'd known ahead of time how he felt, we probably wouldn't have done the story . . . or would have done it in a different venue, like the annual, where someone other than JR could have done it.

You don't want to play to your artists' weaknesses; you don't want to shove something down their throat that they fundamentally do not want to draw. By the same token, **Dave Cockrum**, when he drew X-MEN, was a big fan of Nightcrawler, so Nightcrawler got a lot of "air time," so to speak. **John Byrne** didn't like Nightcrawler that much, but he *loved* Wolverine, so you saw the de-emphasis of Nightcrawler and the emphasis of Wolverine, with ramifications that changed the shape of Marvel.

That's what I'm talking about in terms of different directions. There are characters that Jim will mesh with that Whilce won't; there are types that Whilce will love to do that Jim won't. How those interact with the writer will define how the books look different.

PAT: *In terms of that, in breaking up the teams into two groups, did you interact with Jim and Whilce: "Which characters do you like best?"*

CHRIS: Oh yeah, there was full consultation up and down the line. To a certain extent it was, "Who do you want to draw? Who do you like the most?" Then, we had to choose: "Well, you can have this one, but you can't have that one. Who will this one work best with — well, not that one."

PAT: *Let's take this question from your side. This is a terrible thing to ask a writer, but do you have a favorite or a set of people within the X-Men universe, that you prefer to handle? That you tend to choose when picking the driving force for a plotline?*

CHRIS: At this point, that's kind of an awkward question, simply because I'm in a situation that no other writer in comics — except maybe **Roy Thomas** — is in. I've written these characters exclusively now for 16 and a half years. 185 consecutive issues. That's longer than most of my audience has been alive. We were looking at it this way: A person who was reading X-Men in high school when I started on it could conceivably be introducing his or her pre-teen kids to it now. People who weren't born when I started writing X-MEN are graduating high school. That's a stretch that no one else has done, I think, since the '50s — certainly no one else in modern comics.

And that changes your perspective. **Tom deFalco's** vision of the new X-MEN book was to have two books done by two different artists with the same five characters in each — essentially making the book a bi-weekly. I opposed that and **Bob Harras** agreed with me — basically

books done by different series with the same characters."

because in practical terms we didn't think it could be done, because the coordination problems between two different artists plotting consecutive stories on that kind of schedule would be a nightmare.

Secondly, it was a waste of resources. We had a dozen or more really superb characters; to have to cull them down to a half dozen — first of all, you'd be casting six characters into comic-book limbo, who would immediately be picked up for some other series, which would perpetuate the X-Factor mess.

More importantly, it created a situation where I was asked to play favorites with characters I couldn't play favorites on anymore. I've known them too long; I don't have any favorites. They all deserve their moment in the sun and to be written as they should be written — which is to say, by me. I didn't really want to see characters in whom I had invested all this time and effort go off to other writers who, however good they are, will always be different.

When a writer becomes identified with a specific character or group of characters, A — you start to feel, unfortunately, a certain proprietary attitude towards them: "my characters," as opposed to Marvel characters that I am allowed to play with for a while. And B — every writer's voice is different. I'm a different person from **Peter David**, or **Roy Thomas**, or **John Byrne**, or **Walt Simonson**, or **Frank Miller**, or **Alan Moore**, or whoever else you want to pick. If I were to do an issue of **SANDMAN** and **Neil Gaiman** were to do an **X-MEN**, we would probably both do excellent stories (knock wood), but to each of us it would not be Sandman, it would not quite be the X-Men, because Neil has the Sandman's voice in his own head and what I would be doing is my interpretation of what I *think* that voice is — based on what I've read and from my conversations with Neil. But I can't crawl inside his head and reproduce the voice. Even if I *could* crawl inside his head and reproduce the voice, it wouldn't be the same, because it would be my interpretation, my perception — and I'm a different person. Likewise his take on the X-Men.

That's the strength of the collaborative process in comics, that you have an interaction between a writer and a penciller, where hopefully everyone is playing to their strengths, and what you come up with in the end is a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. But it will always be different. The X-Men that Jim and I come up with, by their very



nature, have to be different from the X-Men that Whilce and I come up with, or that **John Byrne** and I came up with, or that anyone else and I come up with — because how I interact with Jim is not *quite* how I interact with Whilce, or how I would interact with John or whomever. And that changes the dynamic.

How I interact with **Bob Harras** as an editor is not how I interacted with **Weezie Simonson**, therefore the kinds of stories, the approaches I would take to stories, would be different by their very nature, just coming out of the starting gate, with Bob from what they would be with Weezie — simply because they're two different people; the way I approach one is not the way I approach the other. Weezie's agenda as an editor is different from Bob's agenda as an editor, in the same way that each artist's agenda is different — and that cannot help but change the outcome. You're changing elements of the equation, therefore you can't help but change the result.

This may well be the last interview Chris Claremont gives concerning the X-Men for quite a while. Shortly after this conversation, Chris announced that he was resigning from the writing chores on X-MEN and UNCANNY X-MEN, following a series of editorial differences with Bob Harras. I invited Chris to do an addendum to the interview, an invitation he politely declined. For the next several months, Chris will be touring the country promoting his comics work and his new novel, GROUNDED, as well as working on a third novel.

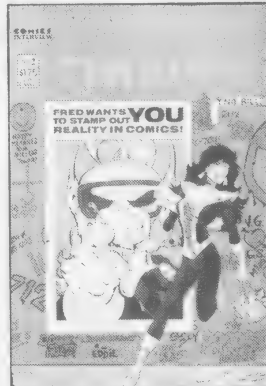


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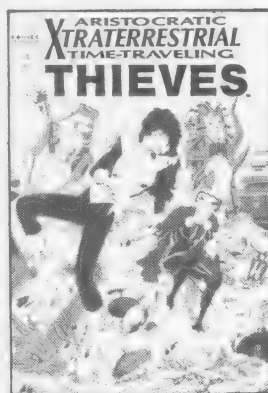
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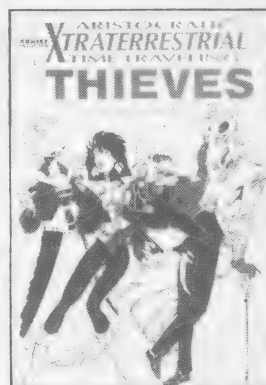


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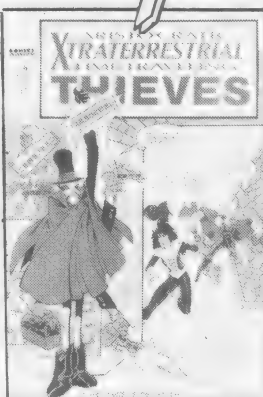
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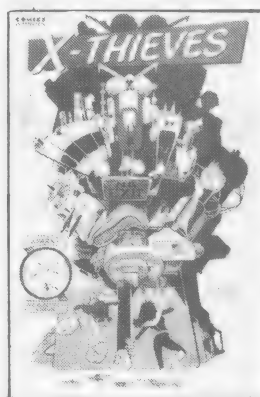
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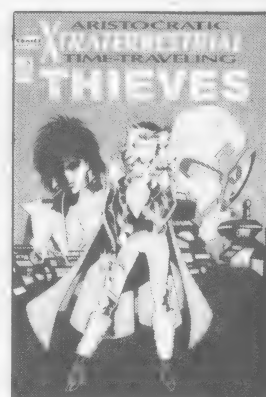
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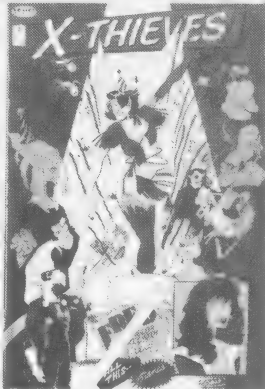
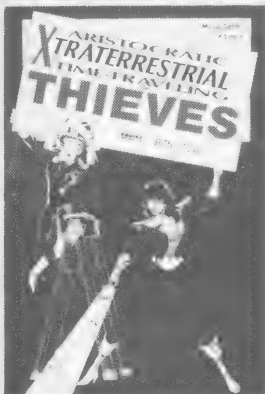
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"I like story arcs in which they build up dramatically to

Homage Studios may not be a household name to the average comics fan but the names Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio and Scott Williams are. These X-traordinary talents make up the core group of Homage Studios and boast such credits as *X-FACTOR*, *UNCANNY X-MEN*, and the soon-to-be-released *X-MEN* title. Homage Studios staffer, sidekick Karl Altstaetter gives a behind-the-scenes look at the creative team that provides the stunning artwork on Marvel's most popular mutant books...

KARL ALTSTAETTER: Jim, you and Whilce are currently plotting *X-FACTOR*. How do you feel about that?

JIM LEE: I'm pretty comfortable with it. I'm not going to pretend it's our best work or anything like that because it is our first professional plotting assignment on a regular series. We're learning a lot. I think the fact that we can write down our ideas, visualize them, and then put the images on paper gives us an advantage over a regular two-person writer/artist team. There is often a difference between the writer's ideas and the subsequent interpretation by the artist as seen working in the "Marvel style." I think every writer/artist should at one time or another do his own complete project. If I were going to do something along those lines, I don't think it would necessarily be in the superhero genre or even in the Marvel take on superheroes. At this point, these are just ideas in my head — nothing really concrete yet.

KARL: You're also working on the new *X-MEN* book. What can readers expect to see?

JIM: Guest stars galore! Ghost Rider in issue #2, Punisher in issue #3 ... (Laughter.) The original idea was that it would be a break from the 15 or 16 years of *X-Men* continuity. Not that it wouldn't deal with the other *X-Men* subplots, but rather that the storylines would be springboards for new story ideas and new villains. In reality, we're incorporating a lot of new villains with things seen from the *X-Men's* past. We have a character coming up named Omega Red that will shed a little more insight into the



Here and throughout this interview: artwork by Jim Lee and friends...

past of both Wolverine and Sabertooth; and also maybe Captain America's past (hint, hint). We also have some material involving the Hand. We'll also look into Gambit's past for the first time and pay a trip down to Louisiana. We'll find that he was betrothed to someone of a different clan and was about to get hitched but, well, basically he runs away from the entire situation after sampling the goods and there are a few people irate about that. Irate to the point that there will be a few bounty hunters after Gambit. If I can

convince Bob Harras that the Brood aren't completely pathetic villains, I'd like to do a storyline involving some of the more vicious *X-Men* fighting it out with them in the sewers. Todd McFarlane and I talked about doing an *X-Men*/Spider-Man crossover and maybe using Arcade as the villain. Although the *X-Men* universe is a subset of the Marvel Universe, it's so large that we have a zillion characters at our disposal to come up with new ideas.

KARL: And plans for *UNCANNY*

HOMAGE

an epic-like conclusion. I'd like to recapture that feeling."



consisting of promotional material, pencil work, character designs, sketches, and other rare, unseen material.

X-MEN?

JIM: We're going to be putting some new slants on some old villains. We have these guys called the Upstarts who will be playing a major role in the first year. Basically, they will be out to get the Lords Cardinal from the Hellfire Club.

KARL: Any plans for new characters in any of the books?

JIM: Plans call for a new character to be added to Whilce's team because they only have five members right now, and they need a character with a certain aura

of mystery to galvanize the team. I also hope to introduce a female character to my line-up, a character that I've been working on for the past couple of weeks. Probably around issue nine or ten of X-MEN. Right now we have a lot of ideas for the two X-MEN books, but we're still in the process of arranging the pieces to create a nice, lean, efficient, fast-moving yet intricate storyline.

KARL: What type of mood are you trying to set on the new book?

JIM: My heyday of comics was back in

the late '70s and early '80s when the likes of **Dave Cockrum** and **Chris Claremont** and then **John Byrne** and Chris were working on the book. I liked the story arcs in which each story built up dramatically towards an epic-like conclusion. I'd like to recapture that feeling on the two X-MEN titles. We want to have tighter plotting and weave any plot threads we introduce into a larger, grander storyline. We also want to avoid leaving any plots dangling for an extended period of time.

STUDIOS

“Hopefully we’ll have a better schedule: We might be



capable of doing our best work under tight deadlines."

Photo: Shel Dorf



Two from Homage Studios: Jim Lee and Scott Williams at a comics convention.

KARL: *How do you feel about the issues you have done so far?*

SCOTT WILLIAMS: The inks looked great. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: And the ones Scott did weren't bad either. *(More laughter.)* I think all of the books were rushed out, and there were more than a few times that we would stay up a few nights in a row to get the thing done. Towards the end of each issue, there were certain things that stuck out to me as being poor work. Hopefully with the new run, we'll have a better schedule and have more time to think about the concepts and the characters. But then again, we might be only capable of doing our best work under tight deadlines. *(Collective groan.)*

KARL: *And what about the work being done on X-FACTOR?*

WHILCE PORTACIO: It's a new experience for me because I like to think of myself as a "realistic" artist. That's why Punisher was so easy for me. Punisher was set in the real world. I've always wanted to do superheroes because I grew up on the Kirby and Stan Lee stuff. This whole thing is a learning experience, and Jim has been a great teacher in the respect that he understands superhero comics so well. I'm here to have fun, and

I think it will be even more fun as I go along. At this stage I'm still trying to get to know the characters. As I go along, I learn more about the characters. Right now they're just a bunch of cool characters that I'm having a lot of fun drawing.

KARL: *Obviously you don't start out pencilling a book like X-MEN. How did each of you get your start in comics?*

JIM: I slipped Tom DeFalco a twenty. *(Laughter.)* I worked up some samples to show at a convention in New York. I showed them to Archie Goodwin, who at the time was Epic editor. He thought the samples were promising enough to give me a try-out story. The editor was Carl Potts, who is world-renowned for seeking out and finding new talent.

KARL: *Give us a brief rundown of your credits for Marvel.*

JIM: My first professional job was ALPHA FLIGHT #51, followed by another ten issues or so. I also did PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL from the beginning and roughly ten issues of X-MEN. Issue #267 of X-MEN was my first issue although it was really a Homage Studios issue. That means that I laid it out, Whilce Portacio then went in and rendered the hell out of it, and Scott

Williams inked it. I went back and then pencilled and inked the backgrounds. The whole issue took us nine days to do. It was a rush job that we picked up to help Bob Harras out on his schedule. Overall we were happy with the way it looked and it went fairly fast, because it really played to each of our strengths. We also did a four-page backup for X-FACTOR using the same method. We also talked about plans for doing future work in the same fashion.

KARL: *Scott, how did you break into comics?*

SCOTT: I came in through the back door — it was just luck. I actually came in helping Whilce Portacio. He needed some help working on deadlines. He was working on ALIEN LEGION and LONGSHOT at the time. I was actually living in Hawaii at the time. My first series was working on STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI inking Brent Anderson. I then moved on to the PUNISHER inking Whilce Portacio and a few other series along the way. I am currently the inker-in-residence on X-MEN.

KARL: *What would you consider your favorite project to date?*

SCOTT: I avoid questions like that. Usually my favorite project is whatever

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"I could call my career quits after I ink Frank Miller."



I'm currently working on.

KARL: Are there any artists out there that you would like to ink but haven't had the chance to yet?

SCOTT: The list is endless. I could basically call my career quits after I ink **Frank Miller**. (Are you listening, Frank?) Most of the people I'm most interested in are the old-timers, the **Gil Kanes**, the **John Buscemas**, and the **Neal Adams** out there.

KARL: Whilce, what about you?

WHILCE: I went to my first San Diego

Comic Con, showed my stuff to **Carl Potts**, and he gave me a job . . .

KARL: It looks like Carl gave everyone here their big break into comics . . .

WHILCE: Pretty much, that's why my starting wage is so low. (Laughter.)

JIM: In all honesty, we all owe a great deal to **Carl Potts**, who really took us all under his wing and taught us the value of discipline.

SCOTT: Carl is one of the few editors out there not only seeking out new talent but prefers taking on new talent because he

believes that once you become a professional you begin to establish poor working habits. Carl wants to get ahold of those young people before those poor work habits kick into gear.

KARL: What have you done in comics so far, Whilce?

WHILCE: I started out on **LONGSHOT** and **ALIEN LEGION**.

SCOTT: And I got fired off of **ALIEN LEGION** . . .

WHILCE: Because of Scott's poor assistance on it. (Laughter.) And then I

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Kristin Austin —
petite, but endowed
with incredible strength.

"I took myself off THE PUNISHER to give Jim a break."

went on to carry **Jim Lee** on ALPHA FLIGHT. *(Laughter.)* . . .

JIM: . . . and then got fired on ALPHA FLIGHT . . .

WHILCE: I might add that we went direct sales only after those two issues so obviously there was some negative news-stand reaction to our issues. After that I took on PUNISHER . . .

JIM: And then got fired from PUNISHER!

WHILCE: No, no! *(Laughter.)* I took myself off of PUNISHER to give **Jim Lee** a break. *(Laughter from all sides.)*

JIM: At the time, I think PUNISHER

WAR JOURNAL was outselling PUNISHER, Whilce, but who's counting . . .

WHILCE: After that I went to work on LEGIONS OF NIGHT . . .

SCOTT: . . . the project from hell which has yet to see the light of day.

WHILCE: Which I should mention, is to date, some of Scott's best work. **Steve Gerber** wrote the series and I fiddled with it visually . . .

SCOTT: . . . for what, two years?

WHILCE: Actually, we haven't stopped yet!

JIM: Lessee . . . 24 months? 88 pages, four pages a month . . .

SCOTT: His fastest work to date. *(Laughter.)*

KARL: What did you do after the LEGION OF NIGHT series?

WHILCE: I decided to give Jim some competition on the X-books.

KARL: Do you hope to eventually usurp Jim as the "King of the Mutants"?

WHILCE: Hope is not the word I would use. *(Laughter.)*

KARL: What word would you use?

WHILCE: Well, it's an eventuality.

JIM: Let it be noted that I did get Whilce the job on X-FACTOR. I was up in New York and Bob and I were talking about



"You can't help but sponge off other people. One of my



biggest influences is Whilce. I broke in assisting him."

possible people for X-FACTOR and I said, "I think Whilce needs work." And lo and behold, Whilce got the job. He's learning, he's a real up and comer.

KARL: *Jim, who are some of the major influences on your work?*

JIM: I could list hundreds but my childhood/teenage favorites were **John Byrne**, **George Perez**, **Neal Adams** and **Dave Cockrum**. I still remember **John Byrne's** stuff when I was a kid and it just looked so consistently pretty and slick. It was detailed and dramatic. The work had a quality that I try to incorporate into my own work. **Dave Cockrum's** early stuff, I thought, had a lot of dynamic motion to it. The storytelling was really fun. **George Perez's** work was always really detailed, he gave 120% every month. I grew up reading comics in the '70s. I don't think I ever saw a Stan and Jack comic until I was 15 or 16. More recent influences have been artists like **Kevin Nowlan**, **Barry Windsor Smith**, **Mike Mignola**, **Art Adams**, **Mike Golden**, **Whilce Portacio**, **Scott Williams**, **Joe Chido**. I'm learning a lot from Joe in terms of color theory and trying to do more color work. When I go through the bundles of comics that Marvel sends me I look at everyone's work and I feel that everyone does something that is worth noting. I should also add **Walt Simonson** whose work has and continues to influence quite a number of people.

KARL: *Scott, what about your influences as an inker?*

SCOTT: I think that when this question comes up, it's always the same guys that have made the big impressions — **Jack Kirby**, **Neal Adams**, **Will Eisner** — the guys who I discovered as I was reading comics and thinking about drawing them some day. There are a lot of other guys that I thought were the hottest shit — you know — sort of the artist of the week. I remember discovering **Craig Russell** and then **Barry Smith** a little later on. **Paul Smith** when he was doing his run on the X-MEN. At the time I thought it was some of the hottest stuff out. What you do is go through and pick up little bits and pieces of everybody as you go along. **Frank Miller** is the only guy that I go consistently back to and look at his previous work and I'm still jacked by it. Other people's work I will fondly remember and look back at it but most of it is almost of a sentimental nature. Frank's stuff still holds up the best for me. Probably **Neal Adams** had the biggest influence on me. I can still go back and look at his stuff and still get



pretty charged by it. Inkers are a different story. You have to remember that I didn't come into comics thinking inks. I basically wanted to do it all, pencils, inks, coloring, that type of stuff. The only reason I'm inking is because I found a niche and it enabled me to work with people that I normally wouldn't be able to work with. **Klaus Janson** is right up on the top of my list as far as inkers go. You can't see any of Klaus in my style but I look at his work as a way to learn things, that's where the inspiration comes from. Obviously people like **Terry Austin** also influence my work as do the guys in the studio. You can't help but sponge off of other people, so not surprisingly, one of my biggest influences is Whilce. I broke in assisting him. He was the first guy doing professional caliber work, seeing how the pen moved across the page — what tools he used — Whilce is definitely a major influence.

KARL: *Do you try and incorporate other people's style to solve little prob-*

lems or do you create your own solutions?

SCOTT: When I first started inking it was definitely a matter of just pulling bits and pieces out and trying to do, say, **Dan Green**, or else I'd find an old Klaus drawing and try to do something similar. When you start putting in eight hours a day six or seven days a week, you don't have time to pull out bits and pieces. You begin to rely upon your own style and your own judgments. You also respond to the pencils in front of you. So even if I was in a **Klaus Janson** mood, I couldn't do that on Jim's stuff because it is so tight and I know that he wants a clean, crisp, pristine look. In a sense, Jim is the penciller and that makes him the boss and I'll do whatever he wants me to do. If we do a **DAREDEVIL** or a **PUNISHER** book together someday and he lets me go to it, then I'll be happy to rip Klaus to pieces. In the meantime I'm just doing me.

KARL: *Whilce, what about you, who*

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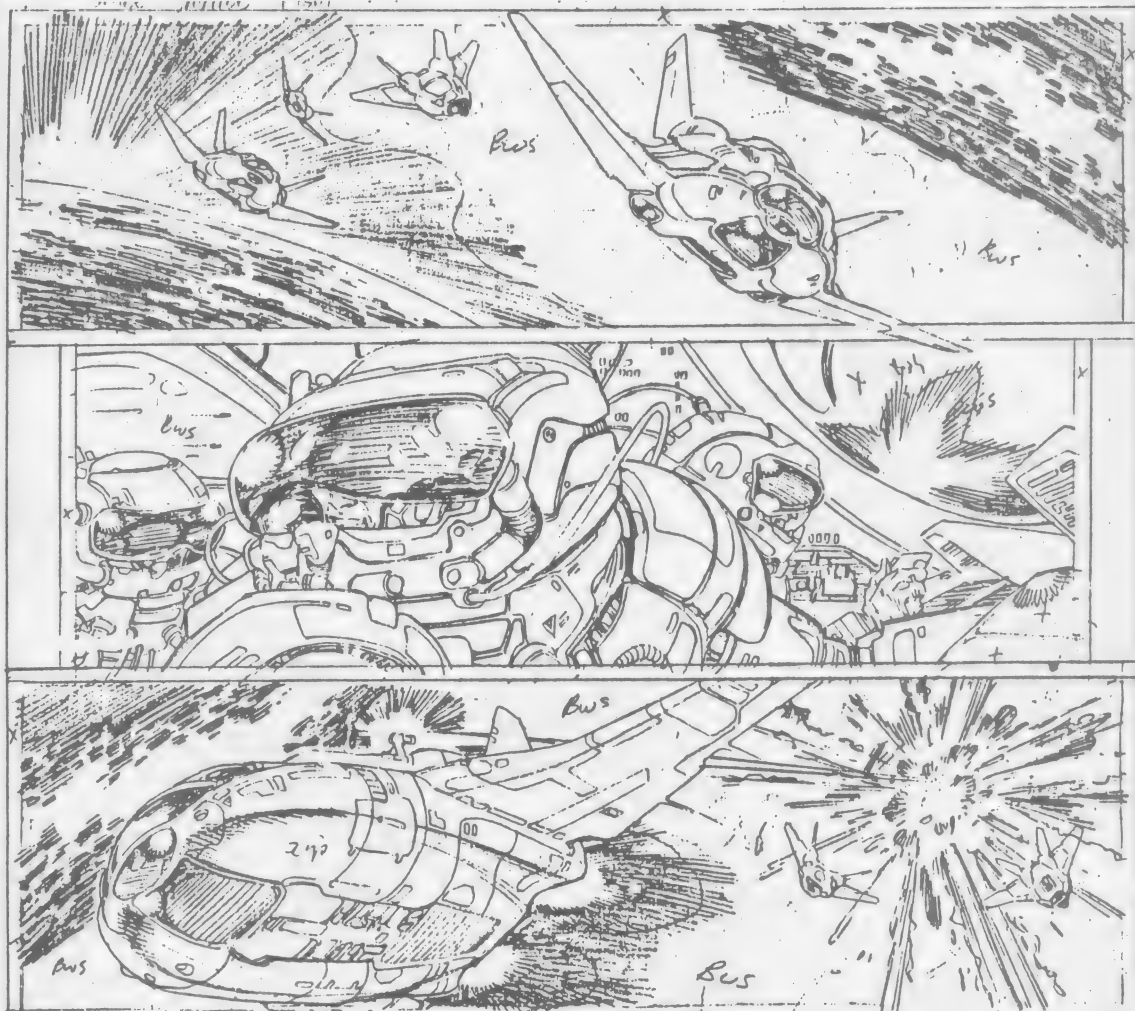
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**#1 SUPER TEAM
OF THE SOUTH!**

"Each artist has to decide what influences to draw from."



influences your work?

WHILCE: All of Scott's influences are my influences. *(Laughter.)* Actually, Scott was the one that got me into comics. We met in high school and he would say, "Look at this stuff by Neal Adams," and I would say, "Man, that guy can draw!" I then started looking at the works of Jack Kirby and John Buscema. You learn from everything that you see. And you don't want to limit yourself to just comics. I got interested in drawing because of a tree that grew in my front yard. One day the tree struck me as being really cool and I thought, "What made that tree totally cool to me?" Once you stop learning from things around you, life around you, you stop becoming an artist and you become what they call jaded.

KARL: What about the argument that to draw comics you don't have to learn from life?

JIM: Some people have made a decent career learning to draw from comics. They haven't taken life drawing classes or studied the anatomy of a tree like you have.

WHILCE: I would argue that the ones that have actually made it and the ones that we actually call "cool" artists are ones that have studied life, not necessarily a structured program through college or anything like that. Anyone that just learns from comics and studies from comics and does "rips" from comics is immediately exposed. If you go to the extreme like Leonardi his stuff is styled to the max where it is a flamboyant interpretation of what life really is; which is structured mistakes. And if you go about just copying someone's structured mistakes, you amplify those mistakes. I would argue that the ones that say they have learned their craft just through comics have actually studied life.

KARL: What if I were to tell you that some of the most successful artists in comics today received all of their inspirational and drawing techniques from comics? And these people are considered, by the comic-buying public, some of the hottest artists around.

WHILCE: Well, inspiration is one thing, I think each artist has to decide how he wants to approach his work and decide what influences they want to draw from as far as style.

JIM: I don't think we can chide anyone for not wanting to sit hours on end looking at a tree to draw a tree, even though I'd recommend it.

KARL: You're saying that one form is just as valid as another?

JIM: I don't see comics, and really most art, as an attempt to replicate what we see in the outside world. There's really no need to do that because we have photographs. And even photographs are an

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Connie Ronnin — wielder of the psychic sword.

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#1 SUPER TEAM OF THE SOUTH!

"A team of heroes is (excuse the phrase) comic-booky."

abstraction of reality. There's no point in drawing something that looks totally realistic and I would point out that even the "realistic" artists like **Neal Adams** are taking quite a few liberties.

KARL: *What you're saying is that this is basically a discussion on a means to an end on how you become a comics artist. You don't feel that one direction is superior over another.*

JIM: It depends on the point of view that you take. Whether you take it from the point of view of the kid who's reading the comic or from a professional's point of view. You could also take it from the point of view of a person outside of the comics industry. I think most of our audience consists of kids, teenagers. I don't think most of them have the ability to differentiate between good and bad drawing. I do think that they can tell what looks neat or cool from what looks bland and lifeless. I don't think they're concerned that someone is eight or ten heads high or whatever.

KARL: *Who are you out to please? Are you out to please the fans or fellow professionals — or is it a little of both?*

JIM: I think it is a combination of the two. First and foremost, I think, you have to please yourself. You can't draw something you're happy with if you're just hacking it out and then saying, "Well, I'm done." My feeling that if I'm going to sit eight to ten hours on a chair drawing buttons on shirts and high-tech machinery I better enjoy doing it. Every-

thing I do I think I do because I enjoy drawing it. First and foremost I want to entertain the readership. I don't consider myself an "artist" even though I do all of the things that "artists" do. What I'm here to do is tell a story in a dramatic and visually interesting way. And a good part of determining how well you're entertaining your audience is by sales. That's one way to gauge the popularity of the book although it's not the only way. You can still have a very popular comic that doesn't sell well although it has a very die-hard, cult following. I like to think that we reach a lot of different groups. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't interested in what other professionals thought of my work. These are people that I not only respect but also admire and it gives me a big charge when someone comes up to me and tells me what they like about my work. That's always gratifying.

KARL: *Do you have any goals or aspirations of trying to push the envelope of the comics medium? Is it important to not only create an entertaining piece of work but at the same time to push the boundaries of comic storytelling?*

JIM: I think there's room for both at the same time. I would say that, for instance, **Frank Miller** really added some new things to comics that didn't exist before. He extrapolated and took what **Will Eisner** did and added to it.

SCOTT: Is there anything new to do in comics?

JIM: To tell you the truth, not a whole lot

in the superhero genre. Although, I think that one should never say never. To say that everything that can be done in superheroes has been done would be premature. **WATCHMEN** and **DARK KNIGHT** were a new take on superheroes, and it has had a pretty lasting impact. I think there is room although I question if there is room within the work I'm doing on **X-MEN** for Marvel Comics. My answer would be, yes, there is, although I think you have to try harder to inject that into your work. It's too easy to fall into the mode of just producing adventure after adventure, fight after fight.

KARL: *How do you perceive yourself in regards to your work on X-MEN?*

JIM: The thing with **X-MEN** is that it's a team book and I think that if you had a single character book it would be a little easier to orchestrate the characters and the scenes. The concept of a team of superheroes is, excuse the phrase, comic-booky. It's something that no one else ever does outside of police-type stories. When you have all of these characters with varied personalities it's difficult, within the context of 22 pages, to expand upon a scene in a visual way. Most team books tend to have five to seven panels a page because in order to tell a story in 22 pages you need more panels than in a single-character book. With a single character, like the Punisher, you could probably take one or two pages and have a long scene of him loading his gun with



"The fans see you as an entity rather than a person. You

bullets and thinking about revenge while he's doing it. You do that in a team book and not only do the other characters get neglected but the story doesn't advance.

KARL: *How do you feel about your new-found popularity and the whole take on conventions and fans?*

JIM: The response is overwhelming. For the first couple of years there was a growing number of fans that liked my work. Now it has sort of reached a crescendo. Maybe, maybe not, it might keep going, it might drop off tomorrow, who knows? The point is with the numbers I face at conventions now, it's overwhelming. I'm not saying it's good or bad. There was a point in time when I resisted opening up to the people because I felt it was a strange sort of notoriety. I mean, it doesn't get you a good seat in a restaurant, that sort of thing. It just means that you draw superheroes in a popular fashion. I've never seen comic-book artists as celebrities and yet people insist on calling them that.

SCOTT: Let's face it, you can be hot shit at a comic-book convention and then walk out and you're basically Joe Schmoe once again.

JIM: You're actually put in an unnatural position. How often are people put in a position where you're in a room with 1,000 other people and 500 of them want to see you; want to talk to you and have something signed by you? To be perfectly honest it's not always a pleasant feeling. You can really feel boxed in and feel like you almost have to measure every word and every action. You either accept it; are overwhelmed by it, or you avoid it. I feel the fans sort of see you as an entity rather than as a person. I think you have to give up any sense of privacy when you go to these conventions. People will interrupt your conversations or hit you up in the john, that sort of thing. These people just assume that you want to talk to them at any time, any occasion. The polite thing to do is try and please everybody, but it can be a very draining experience.

SCOTT: I think the key word there is polite. After all, these are the people who admire your work and support your work. Don't think we're not appreciative of the fans that come up and express their enthusiasm of our work. Just understand that if we are ever approached and we say something that isn't as nice as you like, it's because it's tough being inundated by everyone all at once.

JIM: Any individual kid's desire to meet you and talk about your work is no problem. I guess what conventions are all about is meeting the readers and letting

them have the chance to give you some feedback on the books. I think things have changed. Now everybody wants a sketch and books signed and to a large extent that's all they want. I sometimes wonder what purpose we really serve. Do these kids really get that much out of us signing their comics?

KARL: *I'm sure there are times that the*

mother comes up with the child and they're always appreciative of getting a signature for their son.

JIM: Yeah, the mothers are the best, they always get a free sketch. I do free sketches for the kids. Another reason we go to conventions is to sell our artwork to the people that collect the stuff. The artwork generally tends to go for high



have to give up privacy when you go to conventions.”

prices because of the demand and the fact that we can justify the prices because of the amount of time we put into the artwork. I don't think that the younger readers look at comics as a business; I know they don't. Depending upon the size of the crowd, I like to do free sketches for the kids to show them that not everything has a price. Not every-

thing has to be put away in mylar and marked up 300% in a couple of months. At some conventions, I get the feeling that people think that that is what it's all about. At the same time, I've almost come to expect pissing off two or three people at each show because there's no way I can draw a free sketch for everyone. That's the unfortunate thing

you have to deal with at conventions. It's certainly nice to be popular and sought out by the readers at conventions. But, I don't think anyone at this studio got into comics so that we could be popular and attend conventions all of the time. I still wonder at times if conventions were part of the job description when I signed on. I get the impression from con organizers



"A letter from a woman said I portrayed women in a



that they just assume that we do every show we get invited to. I'm not sure if they think about the fact that it's work for us. I tend to be quiet around people I don't know and yet at conventions to do that around the kids would really be doing them a disservice. I make it a point to say hello and talk to everyone.

KARL: *You sort of become an attraction — a ride.*

JIM: Right, and there's no way that they can meet the real "you" anyway given the time constraints. They're there basically to meet this entity and if you keep that in mind, it makes it easier to attend these cons.

KARL: *How do you feel about the portrayal of violence or the way women are portrayed in comics?*

JIM: I got an interesting letter from this woman in Massachusetts that mentioned that I portrayed women in a submissive role in an issue of X-MEN; that their costumes were torn and things like that. Essentially, as far as torn costumes are concerned, I would like to say that I do that across the board. It would be sexist to just look at the female figures and note the attire.

KARL: *You have Wolverine and Ka-Zar naked half the time.*

JIM: Right, and as far as the submissive stuff goes, it was part of the story. There was a scene where a female character was leaning against this guy who was really her servant — she was completely aware of her own sexuality — and she saw him as her plaything. And it may appear that she is fawning or submissive because she is shorter than the guy and she's leaning up against him. Chris and I were trying to bring an element of sexuality into those scenes by showing her as someone who was very evil and powerful and also had a healthy sexual appetite. The guy was basically a dupe and she was using him as a toy. The thing with comics, or any form of communication for that matter, is that you are open to misinterpretation. **Todd McFarlane** mentioned to me some of the response he received on the Hobgoblin/Ghost Rider crossover in SPIDER-MAN. Hobgoblin was referring to some god that he was worshipping. Some of the readers felt it was blasphemous. The point was that the Hobgoblin was completely deranged and his sense of reality was different than how we would view reality. I think that the readers sometimes have difficulty in seeing the subtlety behind the dialogue; finding out what the character is really saying as opposed to the words coming out of his mouth. As far as violence in

submissive role in X-MEN. Their costumes were torn."

comics, it doesn't really bother me because I don't think we do things that are too extreme. I don't think they've reached a point within their moral code of conduct to realize there are other ways in which to resolve conflicts which are a little less violent. A case could be made that comics perpetuate the feeling that "might is right," but I think that in most Marvel stories there is always a cost to violent resolution. I think most Marvel comics have some sort of fight in them, but that if the characters really wanted to work things out in a non-violent way, they could.

KARL: *I don't picture Doctor Doom trying to negotiate a solution.*

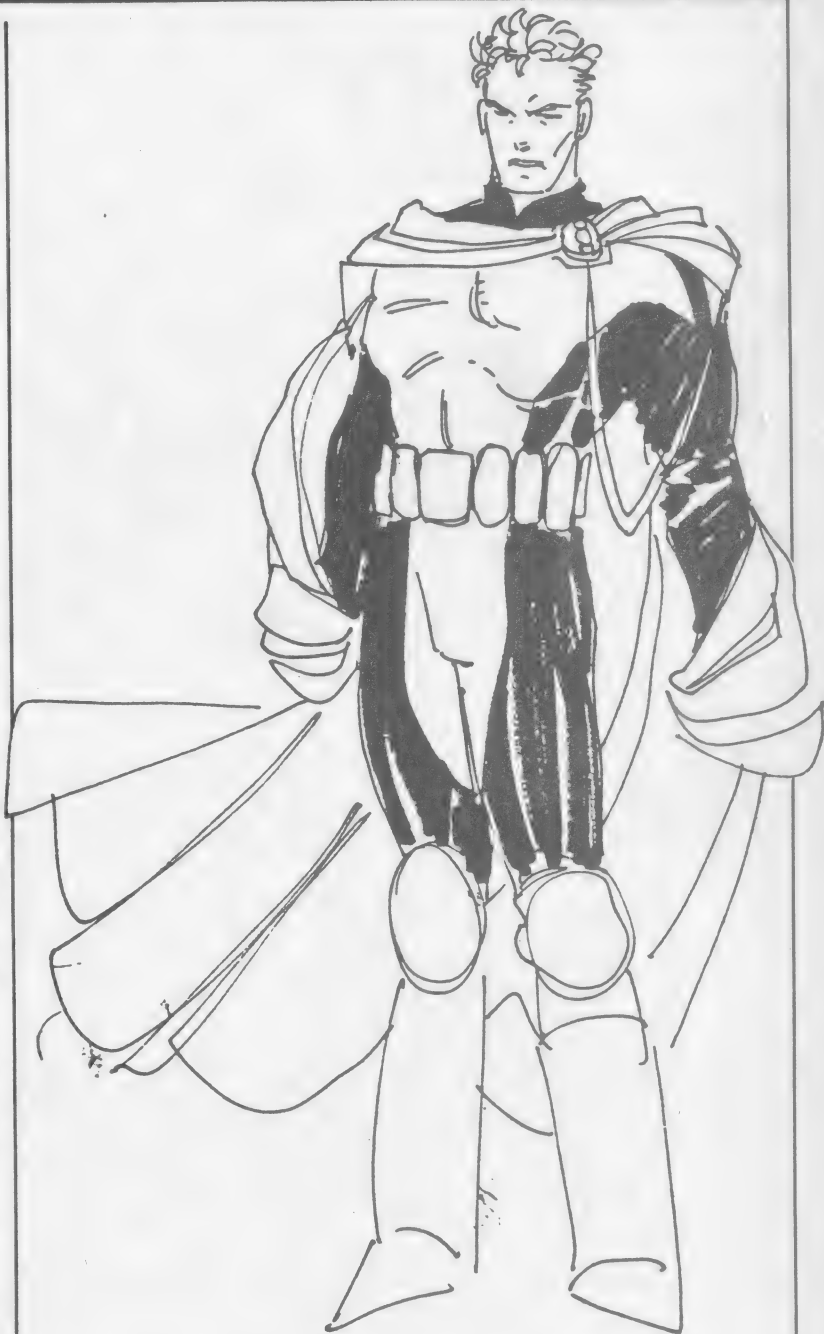
JIM: True, what do you do when you're faced with a villain that's the Saddam Hussein of the Marvel Universe? Maybe it's just that the villains in Marvel Comics are so totally unyielding.

KARL: *How would you compare the violence in comics to that of other media?*

JIM: I would say it's equal. Television and movies have plenty of violence. A lot of superhero violence is Saturday morning cartoon violence, people going through buildings, throwing trucks, that sort of stuff. You know, the Blob falls from the air and squashes a person. The Punisher would be a different case but I think it mirrors our times. I think there is a case to be made that it is a cathartic thing for the readers. Many of the readers probably feel helpless when they see the amount of violence across the United States and it's reassuring to know that there is this guy called the Punisher running around with his own code of conduct. The thing is it only works in comics. The premise is that the Punisher never makes a mistake. A real vigilante could never do that, the Punisher never takes out the wrong guy and that's what reassures the reader. The idea of a vigilante in real life is very scary.

KARL: *Getting back to your work on the new, adjectiveless X-MEN for a moment. What format will it be in?*

JIM: A highly collectible format. (Laughter.) As it stands right now, Whilce's first issue of UNCANNY X-MEN will be #281 and I will be the artist on the new X-MEN book starting with issue #1. Both books will ship in August. Whilce's book will sport a dashing wraparound cover and both books will eventually be in the \$1.00 newsprint format. The X-MEN book will have five different editions and each week of August will have a different cover. The first four editions will all fit end to end to form a larger cover. The



fifth week's shipping will have a reprint of all four covers in a wraparound, double gatefold cover which will be printed on higher quality cover stock. Each issue will also have pinups which will be unimportant to the storyline and may be reprinted in the special edition.

KARL: *How will the team be divided?*

JIM: I get all of the good characters. (Laughter.) Actually, I think Whilce's team is more powerful than my team.

That's why I'd like to introduce a new female character. X-MEN will be led by Cyclops along with team members Wolverine, Psylocke, Rogue, Gambit and the Beast. Pretty much the characters I enjoy drawing and whom I can empathize with. The UNCANNY X-MEN will have Storm as the leader with Jean Grey, Colossus, Iceman and Archangel rounding out the group. What's interesting about the X-MEN

"We will develop new characters. We hope to instill the



same intensity and creativity as some of the older runs."

book is that Chris has developed one of the longest runs of any writer on a series but rather than redo old stories, we will be developing new characters, new villains. And that is extremely challenging to me because it takes so much more creative energy. At the same time, it creates a sense of creating something new — and that's something I haven't experienced before on any other title. It makes it very exciting for Chris and myself. On the other hand, we hope to instill the same type of intensity and creativity as some of the older runs on the book.

KARL: Who would you say is your favorite character?

JIM: I really don't have a favorite character, it's a team book. I think if I had to draw just Wolverine or Colossus, even though I enjoy drawing them a lot, that I would get tired of it. And that's ultimately why I left the PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL. The Punisher has two emotions: pissed and very pissed. His range of emotions makes you repeat yourself visually. It's always a gun; it's always a van or a drug dealer. **Carl Potts** tried to broaden that and I think he did a good job, but after awhile you're drawing the same thing month after month. With each coming month it gets less interesting and a little less challenging. With the X-MEN title there is such a large ensemble of characters and villains that you're challenged every month.

KARL: Whilce, who's your favorite character?

EVERYONE: OPAL! (Laughter.)

KARL: We all know that by your tenth issue of the UNCANNY X-MEN there will be a team of five or six Japanese chicks running around.

WHILCE: Yeah, sigh . . . Opal Teen! (Laughter.)

KARL: How long will you be committed to the book?

JIM: I like the idea of doing a long, long run on X-MEN up to the point that people will start remarking, "Oh, this stuff, it's all starting to look the same." I tell people between 25 and 50 issues. As long as it's fun to do, I'll continue to do it. X-MEN was one of my two favorite comics along with **Frank Miller's DAREDEVIL**, and it's a total gas right now.

WHILCE: I'd have to say that I'll stay with UNCANNY X-MEN as long as Jim stays with X-MEN.

KARL: Scott, how long will you stay with X-MEN?

SCOTT: Until I get a better offer from **Frank Miller**. (Laughter.)

JIM: X-MEN was the book I collected as



a kid and now I earn more than a decent living off of the book. But the fact of the matter is that it is a lot of work, and I don't think I'd be putting in the time or

care as much as I do if I really didn't enjoy the characters. Right now it's just been a real blast and I don't see that changing.

BACK
ISSUES

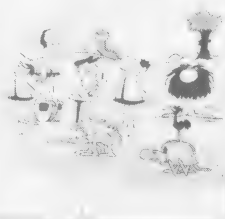
COMICS REVUE

SINGLE - \$5.00
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#1 Garfield, Peanuts, B.C., The Wizard of Id, Frank & Ernest, The Born Loser, Tumbleweeds, Bloom County

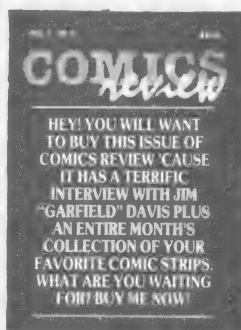


COMICS
revue

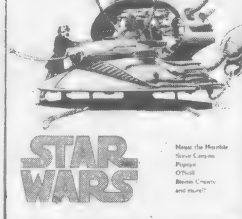


#2 Garfield, Peanuts, B.C., The Wizard of Id, Frank & Ernest, The Born Loser, Tumbleweeds, Bloom County

#3 B.C., The Wizard of Id, Bloom County, Beetle Bailey, Blondie, Marvin, Hagar the Horrible

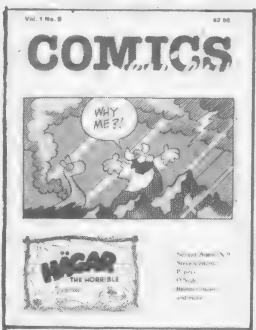


COMICS
revue



#4 Star Wars, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, O'Neill, The Amazing Spider-Man, Popeye, Bloom County

#5 Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Popeye, O'Neill, Steve Canyon



COMICS
revue



#6 Latigo, Popeye, Flash Gordon, The Amazing Spider-Man, O'Neill, Secret Agent Corrigan, Hagar the Horrible

#7 Gasoline Alley, Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, O'Neill, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Gasoline Alley, Bloom County, Steve Canyon



COMICS
revue

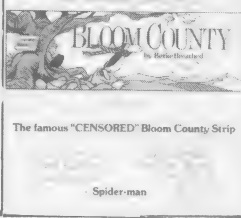


#8 Steve Canyon, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, Latigo, O'Neill, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, The Amazing Spider-Man

#9 Bloom County, O'Neill, Secret Agent Corrigan, Gasoline Alley, O'Neill, Steve Canyon, Latigo, Flash Gordon, Bloom County

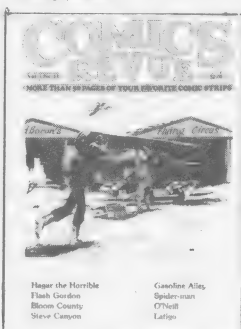


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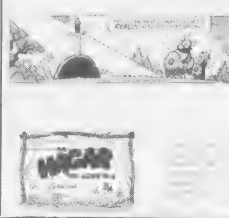


#10 Bloom County, O'Neill, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley, Secret Agent Corrigan

#11 Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, Latigo, Steve Canyon, O'Neill, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, The Amazing Spider-Man

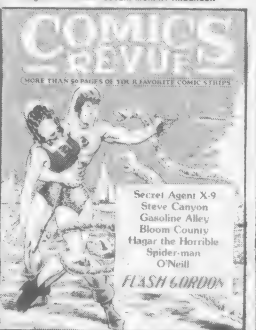


COMICS
REVUE



#12 Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Bloom County, O'Neill, Steve Canyon, Latigo, The Amazing Spider-Man, Secret Agent Corrigan, Gasoline Alley

#13 Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, O'Neill, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible COVER: MURPHY ANDERSON

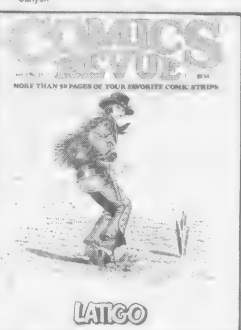


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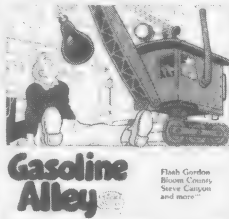


#14 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley, O'Neill, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo

#15 Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon



COMICS
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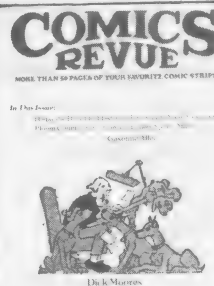
#16 Gasoline Alley, The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan

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#17 Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corigan, Latigo, The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Steve Canyon

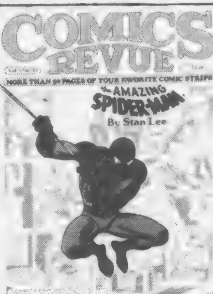


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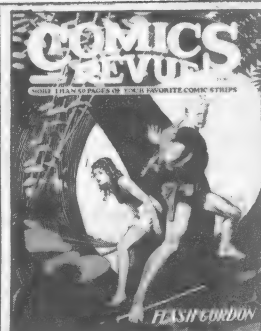


#18 Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corigan, Latigo, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon

#19 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Gasoline Alley

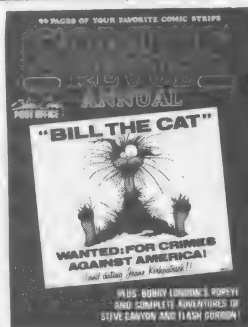
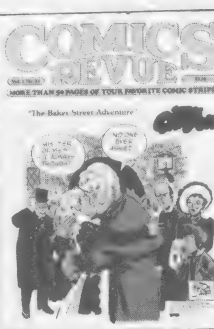


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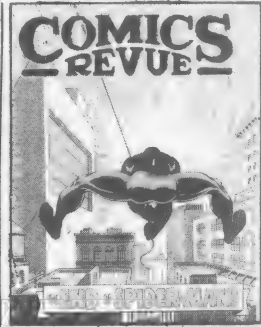
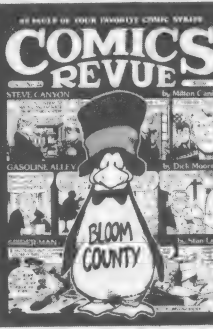
#20 Flash Gordon, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley. COVER: TOM YEATES

#21 Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Secret Agent Corigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley



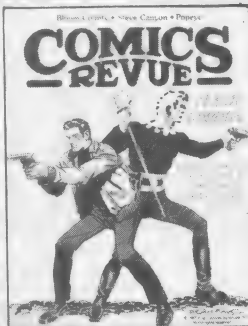
Annual 1 Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Latigo, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley

#22 Bloom County, Secret Agent Corigan, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley



#23 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley

#24 Popeye, Flash Gordon, Latigo, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corigan, Gasoline Alley. COVER: RIMMY LONDON



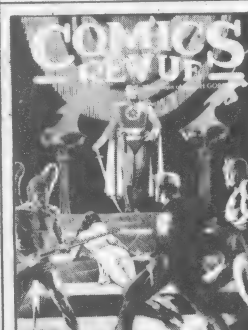
#25 Secret Agent Corigan, Popeye, Latigo, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley. COVER: BEGGIE EWANS

#26 Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Latigo, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley



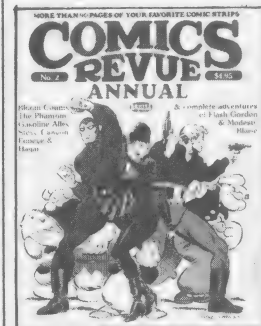
#27 The Phantom, Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

#28 Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, The Phantom, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley. COVER: NECK MILLER



#29 Flash Gordon, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Modesty Blaise, Popeye, Gasoline Alley. COVER: TOM YEATES

#30 Milton Caniff Memorial Issue. Steve Canyon

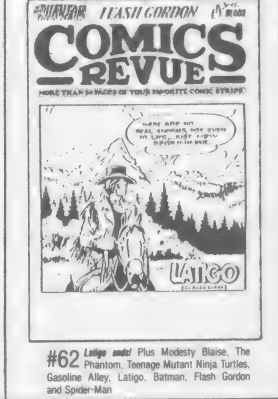
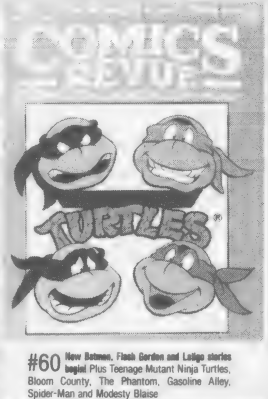
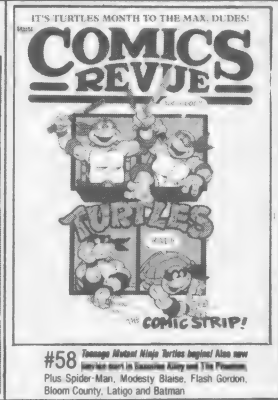
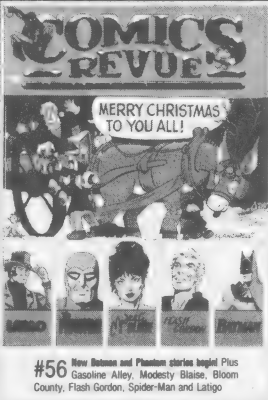
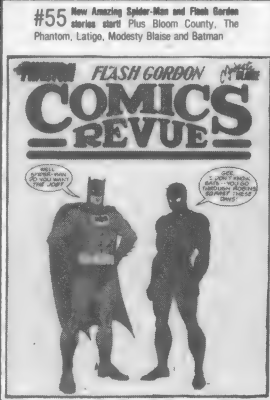
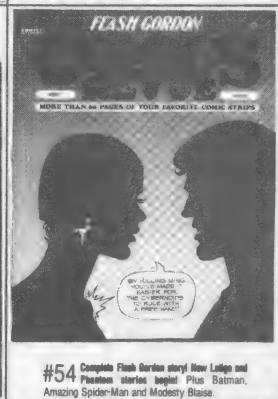
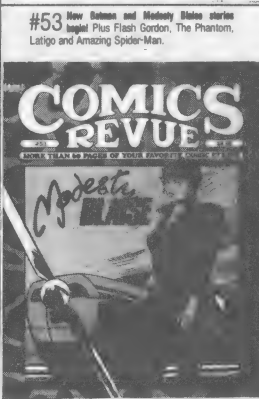
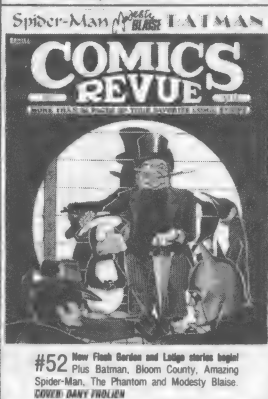
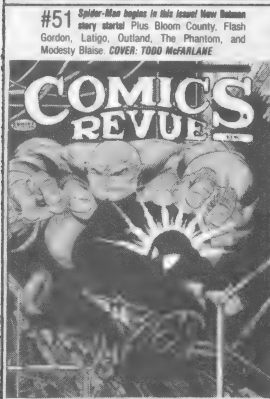
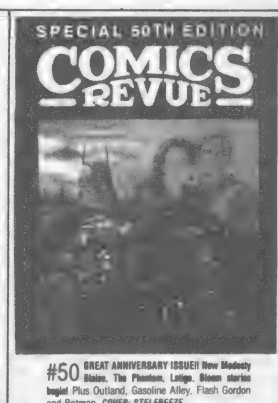
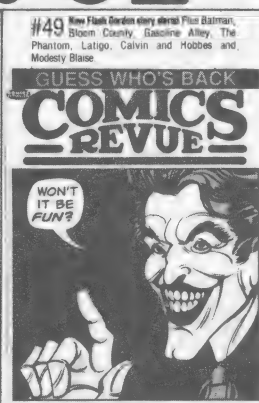
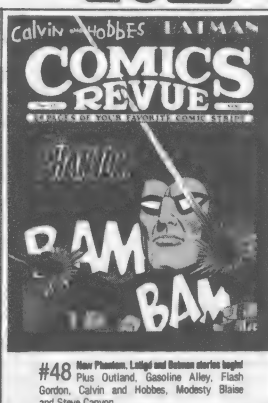
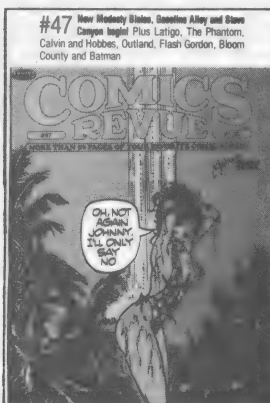


Annual 2 Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley. COVER: FRED & FREDERICK

BACK
ISSUES

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"You're only as good as your last assignment."

GENE COLAN

If you haven't seen his work, you haven't been paying attention. And if you have seen his art and can't instantly recognize a Gene Colan piece, you should know that he has one of the most immediately recognizable, steady, uncompromising styles — whether he is drawing Howard the Duck, Iron Man, Dracula, Batman, Daredevil, Archie Andrews — or Wolverine.

What does this living legend have to say to today's aspiring artists and mutant mavens? Read on (and watch out for Wolverine)...

DAVID HAMILTON: you've done material for Archie Comics.

GENE COLAN: Yes.

DAVID: You've told me in the past that you really love doing this kind of work, and I enjoy it, but how is it really interesting to work on?

GENE: Well, it's very relaxing. This business is not all that relaxing, you know. You're only as good as your last assignment, so all artists are busy trying to do better, and the adventure strips that are realistically done are very demanding. It's difficult staying on top all of the time. Archie is not demanding. It's all cartoon stuff, nothing has to be authentic — it's very very simple work! I find

myself smiling a lot while I'm doing it! I enjoy it, I'm having fun!

DAVID: Are these full scripts or —

GENE: They're full scripts.

DAVID: I figured they were. Do you do the inking on —

GENE: No, no, they have inkers up there that do that.

DAVID: Now, Don Heck has gotten a lot of bad press because he's not a flashy artist, which is what's popular today. In fact, you're not a flashy artist.

GENE: No.

DAVID: Do you have any views on Don's style?

GENE: He's a very capable artist; just one of those overlooked situations.

DAVID: You can look at someone like Don Heck and say, "Boy, that's a great layout." Then you can look at someone like John Byrne and say, "Boy, that's a lousy layout but he finished it great." Can you explain to the audience what's the difference between design/layout and finished material?

GENE: I think it's in the personality of artists. They just inadvertently or unconsciously make something come alive.

DAVID: Is the public fickle?

GENE: Sure. Whatever is popular on Monday may not be popular Tuesday. If

their eyes fall on something they think is better, it's in vogue. It doesn't take away from the excellence of what they saw the day before, it's just that it isn't so popular anymore.

DAVID: It seems to me that in the last fifteen or so years that the artists and writers — especially the artists — that are the most popular today are people who have the least amount of actual training, who know the least about drawing. Frank Miller is a great designer but he couldn't draw a knee joint if his life depended on it. But he has a great sense of design.

GENE: Yes, he certainly does.

DAVID: Why does the public latch onto pieces of talent like that?

GENE: He puts the whole package together very well, and the public doesn't concentrate on the separate parts of it so much. As a matter of fact, I don't think that excellent drawing is all that much appreciated, I think it's the general layout. The fans in general don't really care all that much about the excellence of the anatomy. It's the way it's shown, you know.

"What's interesting about the page? What makes the page sing out? Why do I like this page?" There's a lot of action in

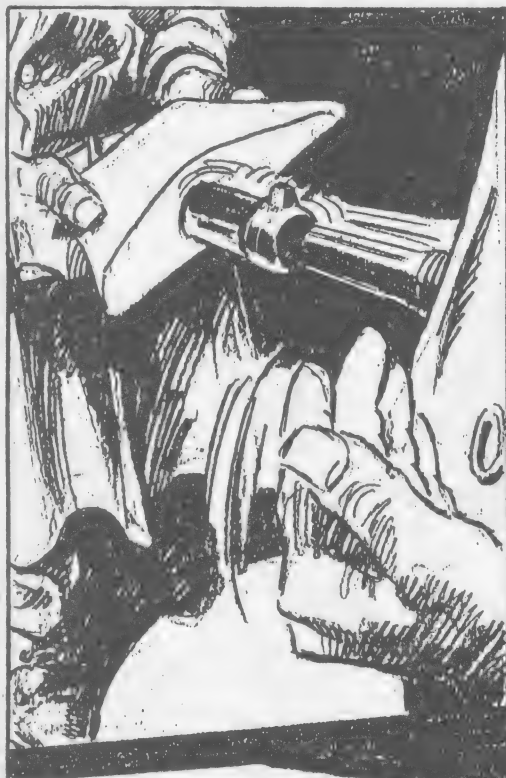
Wolverine, making one of his FEW appearances (the hand, man).



WOLVERINE
PROMISES TO KEEP



For the first time in print, the splash page from DR. STRANGE #12 (2nd. series). Go head, pull that issue out and compare.



it. The action may be terribly distorted, but boy does that page come alive! If it comes alive and it's *moving*, they love it! They don't have to feel that the anatomy — there's always *somebody* that's going to pick on the anatomy, or the inaccuracy of a piece of equipment that you draw.

DAVID: (Laughter.) *I just feel that Frank Miller and some others get away with a lot.*

GENE: Well, he did what nobody else had the foresight to do. He made some tremendous changes, and that coupled with the fact that he's a good businessman, a good talker —

DAVID: *There you go.*

GENE: I might have talked DC right into doing something different. They wanted to give **BATMAN** a real shot in the arm, and **Frank Miller** gave it to them. Whatever it might have been, he gave it. He knew what to do to bring it to life, to make the readers say, "*Jesus! I haven't seen this before!*"

DAVID: *Bash a few heads in and it becomes contemporary.*

GENE: Well, no. Turn Bruce Wayne into an alcoholic and you've got a new story!

DAVID: *But from a visual standpoint, at least for me, the best BATMANs were by you, Infantino, and Bob Kane.*

GENE: Well, you know, a good comic-book artist has to do two things: he has to draw as best as he can, and you've got to be a good *storyteller*! I try to tell that

NATHANIEL DUSK BOOK III.



to my students. They seem to feel if you can draw a good picture then that's all that's needed. They were very much surprised when they heard there's a lot more to this business than just drawing a good picture.

DAVID: *This brings us to the class that you've been teaching for how long now?*

GENE: Oh, about five years now, longer.

DAVID: *What exactly do you teach?*

GENE: I teach at NTA once a week, two classes there, and then I also teach at FIT once a week, one class there.

DAVID: *And you're not teaching them how to draw comics like Joe Kubert?*

GENE: Yeah, in a sense I'm *trying* to, the class is called The Art of Comic Book Drawing.

DAVID: *That answers it all.*

GENE: Yes! (Laughter.) I try to do that.

DAVID: *I imagine you have a lot of students that come in who learned how to draw by looking at other so-called professional artists who don't really truly know how to draw. It's really hard to break a bad habit once you've started it. Do you find a lot of that?*

GENE: No. I try to let the students go with what they've got, in fact I don't even insist that they draw realistically. If they want to be cartoonists, then they have to be cartoonists, be the best cartoonists they know how to be. I won't insist that they draw in any special way, or copy any special style. I just want to bring the *best* out in each of them, and that way they'll



HOWARD THE DUCK

Steve Gerber and Gene Colan



The July 17, 1977 Sunday strip of HOWARD THE DUCK.



Back cover from Marvel Treasury Edition #12 (Howard the Duck), circa 1976.

"I draw to music. I do that because it's stimulating."

do the best.

DAVID: *Are a lot of the students followers of your work?*

GENE: I don't know . . . They seem to go for the blood and thunder a lot. They like to draw a lot of that stuff, action things, and I help them with the drawing when it doesn't come off well, try to show them a better way of doing it. I emphasize storytelling, and I give them plots to do. In fact, I'll bring some of the scripts that I'm doing to class and ask them to give me their interpretations of a few pages. I did that with WOLVERINE. I

was well into the plot and I had them draw the first four pages on their own; I never showed them what I did. Right now in my classes I have each of the students making up their own comic books.

DAVID: *Based on anything in particular?*

GENE: Any of their own characters, they dream up the whole thing on their own.

DAVID: *So, these kids are fairly well on in their view of art.*

GENE: Right. I bring out the very best

that I can in them. I'll do a lot of things that may have nothing at all to do with comics, for instance I have them draw to music. I do that because it's stimulating, it works up the imagination. I do that myself, and I figure what helps me will help them. You'd be surprised at the high that you get from music.

DAVID: *Speaking of music, what was this you mentioned several years ago where you said you were going to "show music" in a story?*

GENE: Oh, yeah. I made an attempt at it with DC when I first came aboard with

Copyright ©1980 Steve Gerber/Gene Colan.



STEWART THE RAT, a 1980 graphic novel by Steve Gerber, Gene and Tom Palmer (from Eclipse).

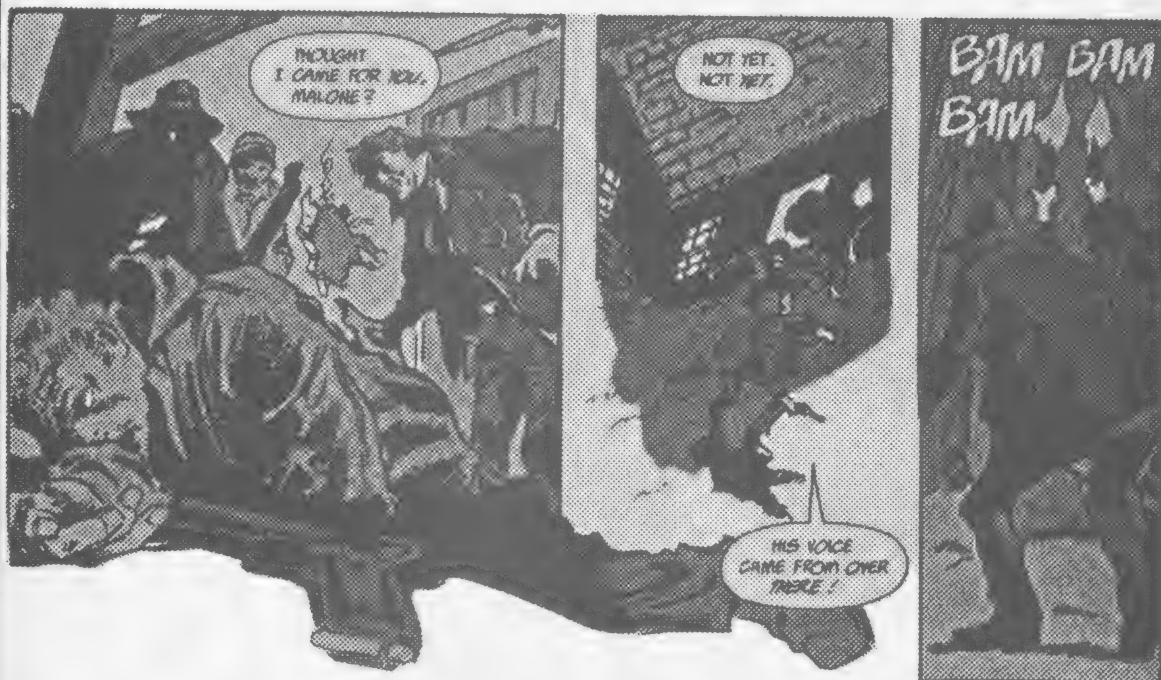


Another page from Gene's 686-page run on Marvel's Dr. Strange.



It took 17 years, but Gene Colan is once again inking his own pencils. Here, page one from a *WOLVERINE* story. For those of you who don't remember, Gene last inked himself on *Dracula* #1, 1971-72 (not counting the one-pager in *Pep* #411 from Archie Comics).

"Music in comics: It was almost stupid in concept."



Before & after: Pencil panels from Gene's first issue of *WOLVERINE* (#9), with the finished inks.

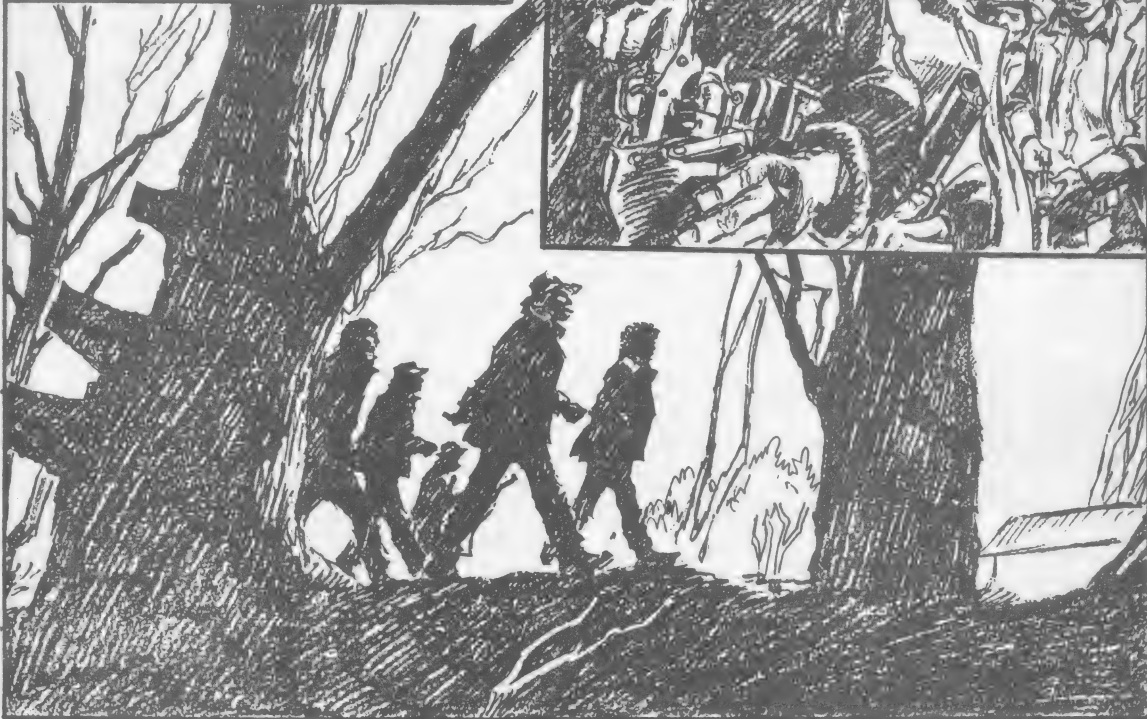
them, and the whole thing just fell apart. I was trying to introduce something that has never been in comics before. If something exciting was happening, I

would have someone playing the kettle drums for instance — it was almost *stupid* in concept. But who knows, it could be developed. I really don't know,

but I just wanted to introduce another dimension that has *never* been done.

DAVID: *I was just curious.*

GENE: Yeah. If there's a fanfare sup-



Pencil page from Gene's inventory Wolverine story.

"Some things you like, some you don't for some reason."

Gene Colan



MACHINE
WOLF TM

Gene provided this illustration, based on David's original design for an as-yet-unsold property, Machine-Wolf. The six-issue limited series was written with Gene's visual sense in mind throughout.

posed to be, say, for King Arthur in his court, then I would have a picture of someone blowing a trumpet at the top of the panel, or just showing a trumpet. It would be a separate thing, or superimposed.

DAVID: *I see. It would be, in film terminology, like an insert.*

GENE: Right. But it fell apart, it just didn't read right. It *looked* ridiculous! (Laughter.) It was like someone before the Wright Brothers trying to invent a way for man to fly.

DAVID: *It might look like Bill Everett's early SUB-MARINER, because he had a lot of techniques where he would have, like, someone writing a letter and there would be handwriting scrawled across the page. Speaking of Bill Everett, did you view any of his SUB-MARINER,*

had you ever been exposed to it before you did it?

GENE: Yes, yes, I've seen it.

DAVID: *It seemed like his influence was there in your SUB-MARINER.*

GENE: No, I don't think so, other than the way the Sub-Mariner appeared, what he looked like. Not his layouts or —

DAVID: *I just meant the overall look of the character. Whoever took on the strip would redesign the character for their style, but when you took over you seemed to go back to the basics of Bill Everett. And years later Bill Everett inked some SUB-MARINERs that you did.*

GENE: Yes. I never enjoyed that strip very much, for some reason I just didn't. First of all, he was difficult to draw. That head of his always threw me off, I never

really felt I ever got it right. And it was just a difficult strip all around. There are some things you like and others you don't for some reason.

DAVID: *IRON MAN* you loved, didn't you?

GENE: Yes, I fell naturally into it.

DAVID: *You're not just saying that because you know I want to hear it?*

GENE: Oh, no, I loved that strip, I really did. I found it easy to draw, I fell right into that. It was a pleasure to do, a very relaxing strip to do.

DAVID: *Well, this has been really enlightening, and certainly a beautiful experience for me.*

GENE: You're a real champ for me. Out of everyone I know, you're the best. Without a doubt, a very sweet fellow, and a very sincere guy too. 

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

DESPERATELY SEEKING GULACY

Dear INTERVIEW,

I really like your magazine. The information inside it is vital to any *true* collector.

I know most collectors try to follow some form of continuity in their collections, whether it be first issue or hero, writer or artist. I'm no different.

One of the first books I collected was Marvel's **MASTER OF KUNG FU**. I fell in love with not only the storyline but also the artwork.

This is where my problem arises. Everyone knows what comics and other material were drawn by the big names — **Kane, Miller, Buscema** and even **Byrne**. I'm trying to collect the artwork of a somewhat unknown or unpraised artist, **Paul Gulacy**.

Paul's artwork has always impressed me. (Even **FEAR #20**.) I've been wondering if there was somewhere I could get a checklist of all his work?

This list would include any artwork he has done for companies both big and small. I would also like a list of all covers, posters, and any other related artwork.

Is there any publication that would give me such information (besides the **OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE**) which I find very sketchy)?

If you could send me such info, or turn me on to someone who can, I would appreciate it very much.

Thank you!!

Gary Chadoc-Caves
PO Box 302
Brockport, NY 14420

Among our readers there surely must be someone who can help you. (Don Rosa, are you out there?) Anyone who may be of aid to Gary in his quest for the best is invited to contact him directly. See you in issue #100!

— DAK

MARVEL INVENTORY: WHO REALLY KNOWS?

Dear David,

As I'd originally intended writing this loc in response to matters raised in **COMICS INTERVIEW #75**, I guess this probably will be the Last Word on that issue.

The issue came out shortly after my first trip to Brussels, and it was the interview with **Thierry Smolderen** rather than **Howard Chaykin** that initially prompted me to put pen to paper. But I put it off, and my recent visit to Brussels for a second time led to me finally putting this together.

The **Chaykin** interview (briefly) was of interest primarily because of the **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #65** info. Collecting one US artist from the UK can be a little difficult because it's at a distance. Other than comics, sf books and some role-playing games, work by specific artists is hard to come by, as is accurate info.. I missed this particular issue of **SSOC**, which having acquired it, appears to be a **Gil Kane**/Upstarts co-production. In addition to the **Chaykin** involvement, the story shows pieces of **Miller** and **Simonson** work, and (at least) one other artist who on a guilt-by-association basis must be **Jim Sherman**. The other thing was the wonderful confirmation that **Grant Morrison's** contempt for (the work of?) **Howard Chaykin** is mutual.

Anyway, on to **Thierry Smolderen**. Firstly, *bandes dessinées* has nothing to do with "*bandes dessinées*;" *dessinées* is the adjectival form of *dessiner* — to draw, hence "drawn bands" or, I guess, "strip art."

Quite astonishing was the suggestion that the Tintin animated series originated from England in the '50s. They're so cheap, they still have the credits in their original French. As they're credited as a co-production between Belvison (who I assume were the national TV station at the time) and Tele Hachette, I think it's safe to assume that they are in no way connected with the UK. Now, I did a little research on my travels, knowing that some of the episodes, shown in five-minute segments (inclusive of front and end credits) on TV over here, were available on sell-through video. I've so far located the following:

"Crab with the Golden Claws" (60 minutes). "Destination Moon/Explorers on the Moon" (87 minutes). "The Black Island" (40 minutes). "The Calculus Case" (58 minutes) — which the case mentions Chateau Moulinsart like the French book. Also the title, varying from the English book title, may suggest a radically different translation. "Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure", "The Shooting Star", "Lake of Sharks", "7 Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun" — neglected to record the running times, sorry!

Since I noted the above, the series has been reissued through another company, so maybe there are other titles available.

Who Is #1?
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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

There's a distinct lack of copyright dates, but they originate from the early '60s as far as I can ascertain, through to the early '70s. A look at the animation display in the Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée (the national comics museum) reveals from notes accompanying cels from the cartoons that the "Prisoners of the Sun" ("Tintin et le Temple du Soleil") was produced by Belvision in 1969, and the "Lake of Sharks" in 1972. (Incidentally, they've got the 1909 "Gertie the Dinosaur" — also credited as 1914 on the display — film running on a video display.)

I think I'd disagree with the idea of specialist shops in Brussels. Though maybe I'm splitting hairs here, but it's where your head is in these matters — yes, there are shops which sell pretty much nothing other than comics, or comic albums, but they're like any other bookshop or newsstand. A specialist shop, in the way I understand it, can come up with back-issue magazines, items out of the ordinary, etc. There aren't many of these in Brussels or Antwerp (the two cities I visited). I went through the Yellow Pages with my fingers, and the streets with my legs (in eight-hour forays).

Anyway, gosh! Another candidate for continued letters . . .

One thing, though, from your distant past at Marvel and DC, did you ever have any involvement in inventory material? I'm thinking in terms of DC romance and mystery, and the Marvel equivalent of US-originated material for the UK weeklies. These were both training grounds for young artists, inkers and the like. As far as I'm aware, they've not been subject to any detailed check-listing. Were any form of records maintained to record the material brought in and used? (I guess the same system, if it exists, would apply to all those uncredited covers).

Keep up the good work — and how about an interview with that talented chap who story-edits THE FLASH TV series?

Tim Barnes
103, Tredworth Road
Gloucester, GLW GL1 4QU
England

Back in the dim and distant dark ages of Marvel, yes, there were indeed inventory stories being produced — mostly for

the black-and-white horror magazines in the mid-'70s and to a lesser degree as fill-ins for the various superhero comics in the event of the regular team missing a deadline.

Much of that material has never, to my knowledge, seen publication and probably languishes in drawers at the Bullpen or has been shuffled off to the warehouse or whatever. I am not aware of any index of this unused inventory, although one may indeed exist. Maybe Mark Gruenwald, if he's reading this, will dash off a short note to enlighten INTERVIEW's readers because "inquiring minds want to know!"

Finally, yes, I was also involved for a time with new material being produced for the British Marvel weeklies. In those days, US comic-length stories were broken into three parts and new splash pages were often written and drawn for parts two and three. I scripted many such "insert" splash pages to reprise "what went before" and budding artists pencilled and/or inked the new single pages. "Dancin'" Dave Wenzel, now of HOB-BIT notoriety, used to draw quite a few of them, as I recall — but I suspect only the accounting department ever kept records of who did what (and after holding them seven years for tax purposes, probably disposed of 'em).

That's all I can help you with, Tim, unless somebody up at Marvel reading this has more info. See you in #100!

— DAK

POPEYE EATS SPINACH PASTA

Dear DAK:

I don't have any venom to spew, sorry.

In Italy, Popeye is called "Bracchio di Ferro." I like the sound of that. Bracchio di Ferro. Sounds a bit like a Mafia capo, doesn't it? Bracchio di Ferro.

I wonder what other cartoon characters are called in Italy, like Garfield, Ignatz Mouse or Archie or Jughead? Does anyone care? Probably not. We all have our problems. I care, somewhat.

I'm curious as to what the Italians call Olive Oyl, Wimpy and Swee'Pea. If it's anything like Bracchio di Ferro, I wouldn't want to meet any of them in a dark alley, although the statistical probability of this occurring is virtually zero.

Jim Singer
8917 W. 99th Terrace
Overland Park, KS 66212

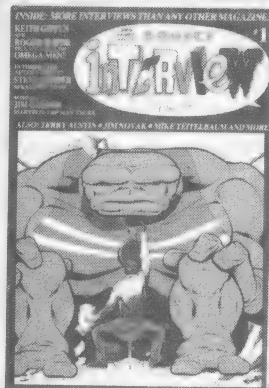
Actually, Jim, some of our Italian readers may be able to enlighten you, although I wouldn't care to hazard a guess as to the statistical probability that they will. See you in #100!

— DAK

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comes great
responsibility —
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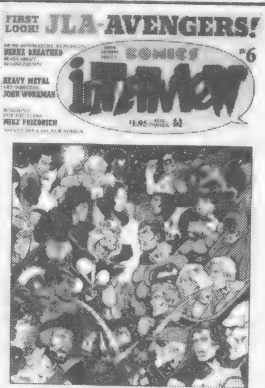
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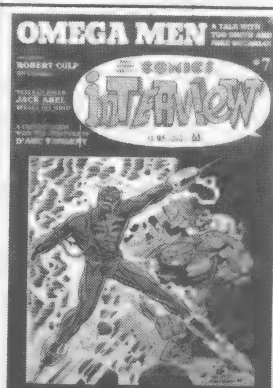
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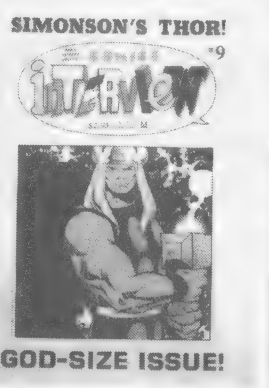
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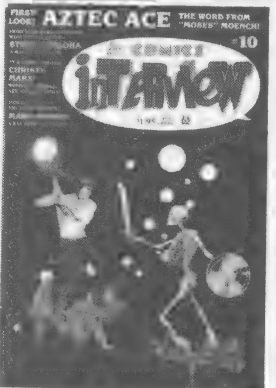
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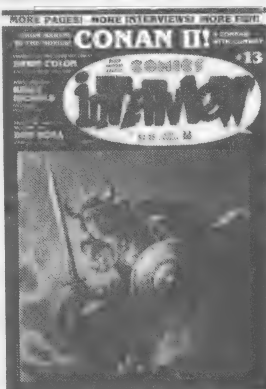
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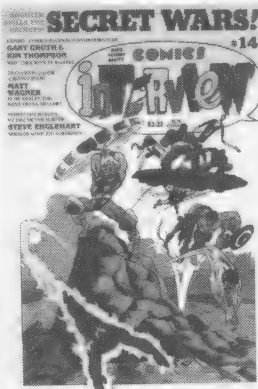
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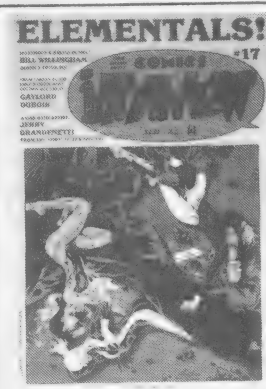
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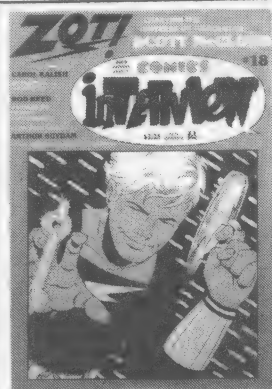
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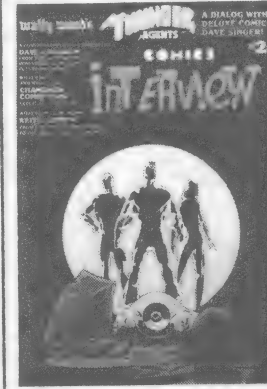
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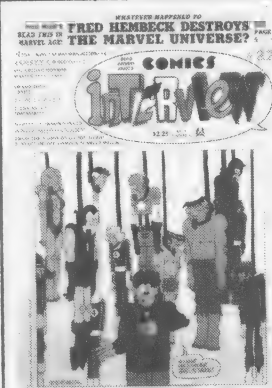
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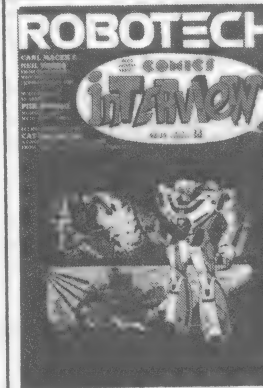
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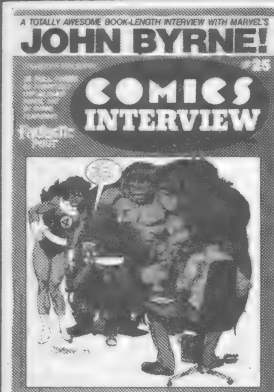
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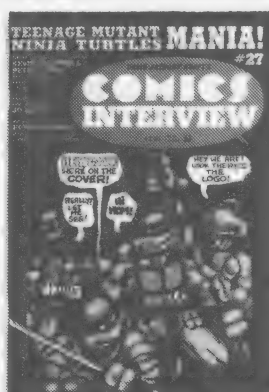
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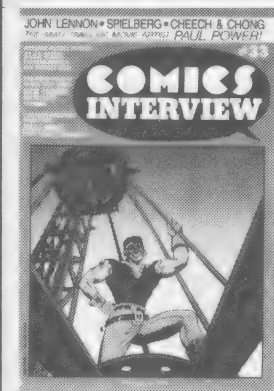
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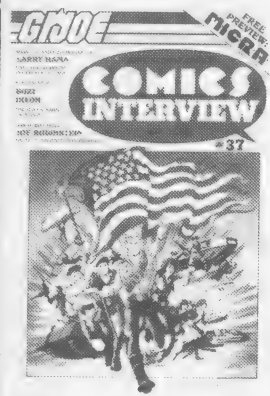
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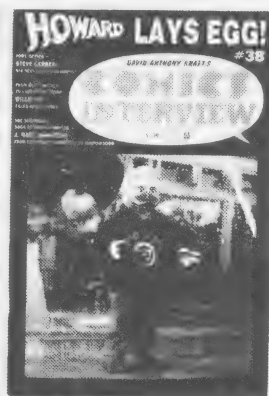
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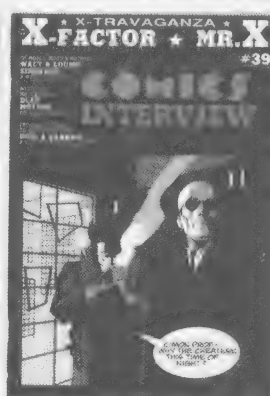
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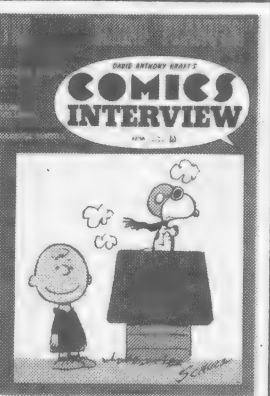
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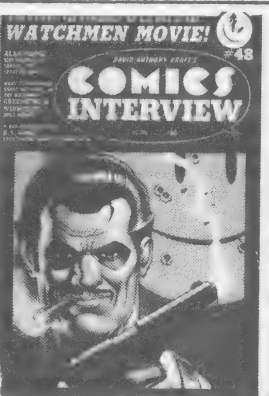
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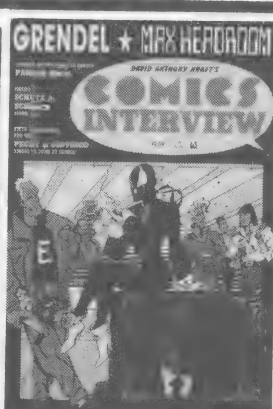
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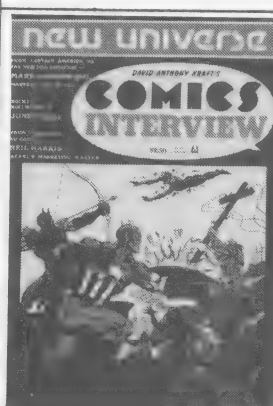
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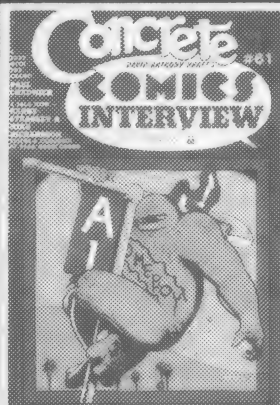
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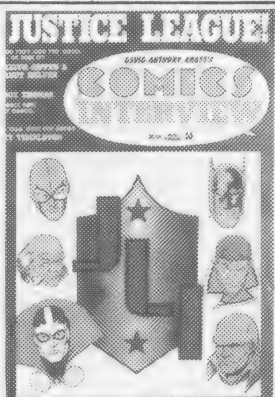
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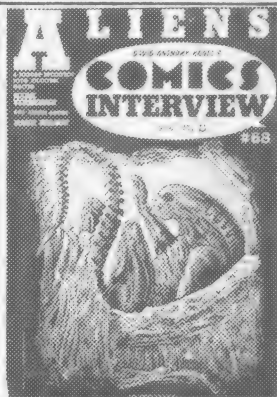
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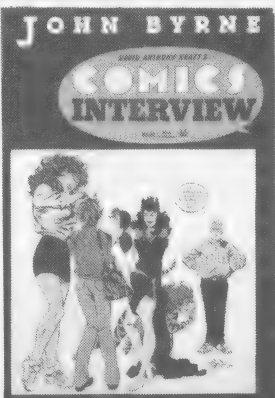
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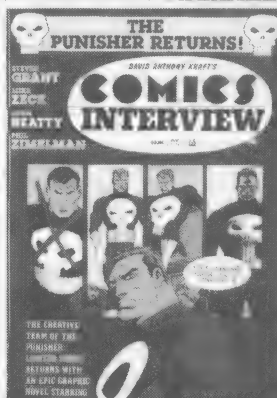
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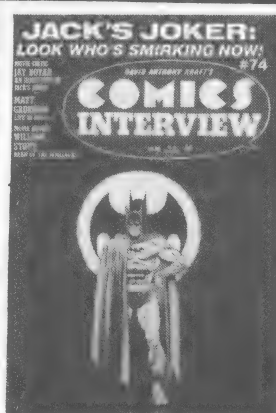
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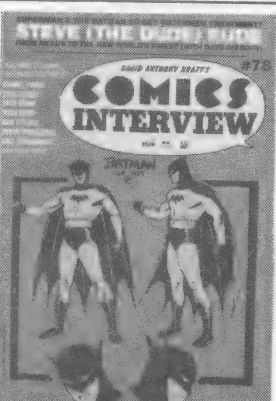
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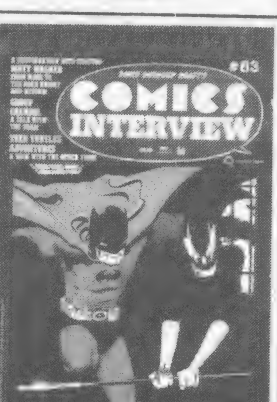
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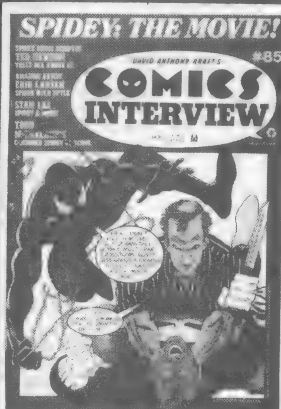
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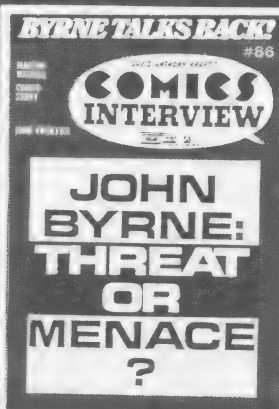
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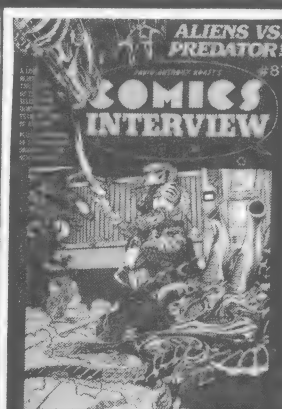
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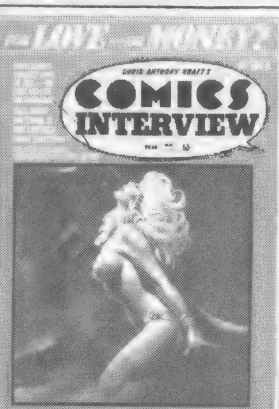
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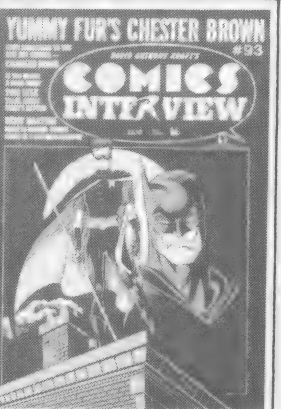
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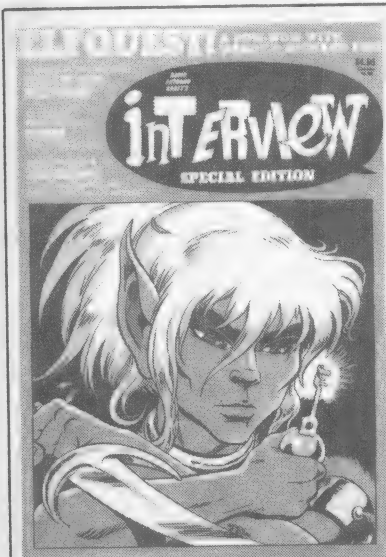
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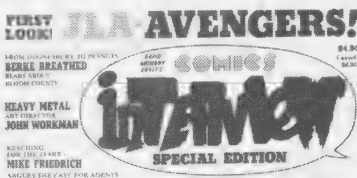
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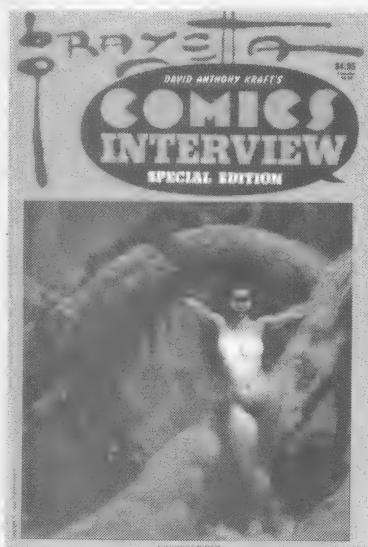


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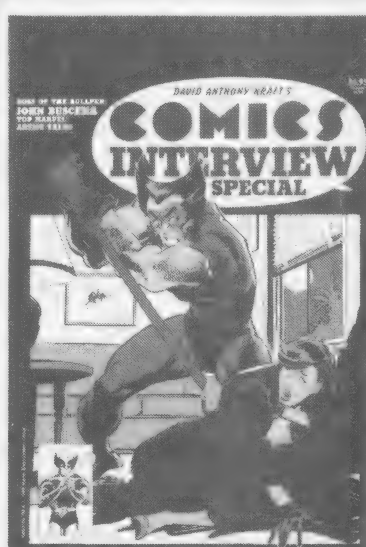
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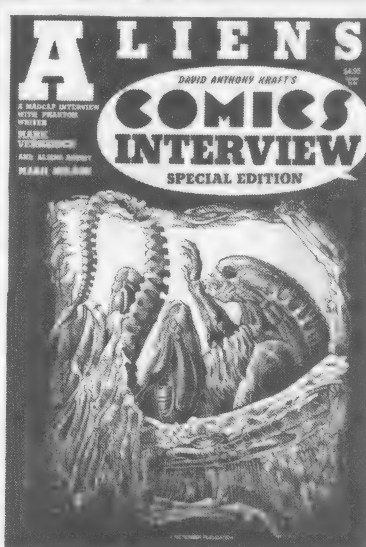
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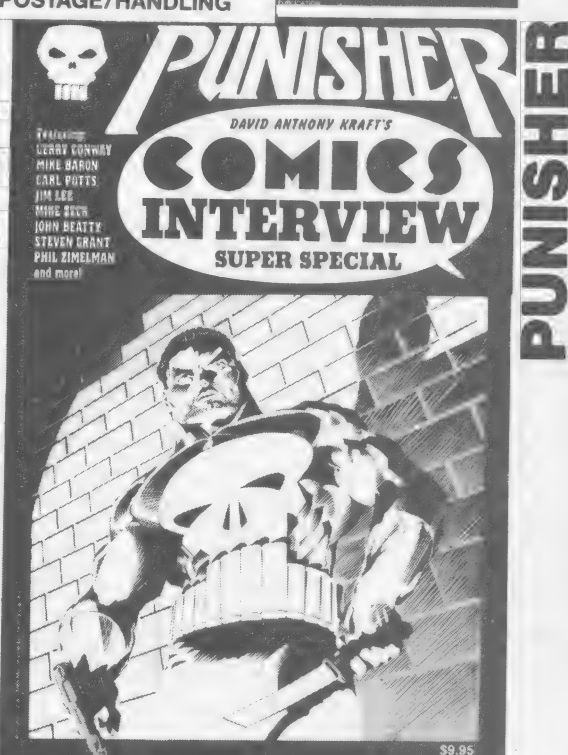
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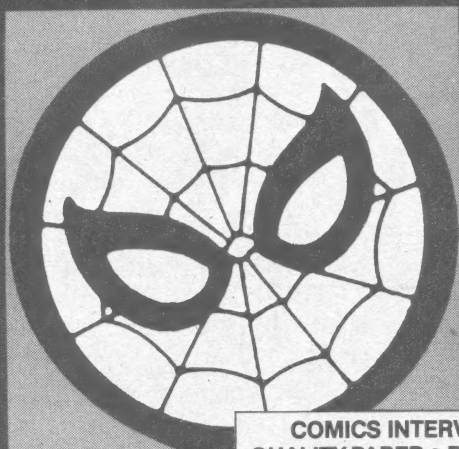
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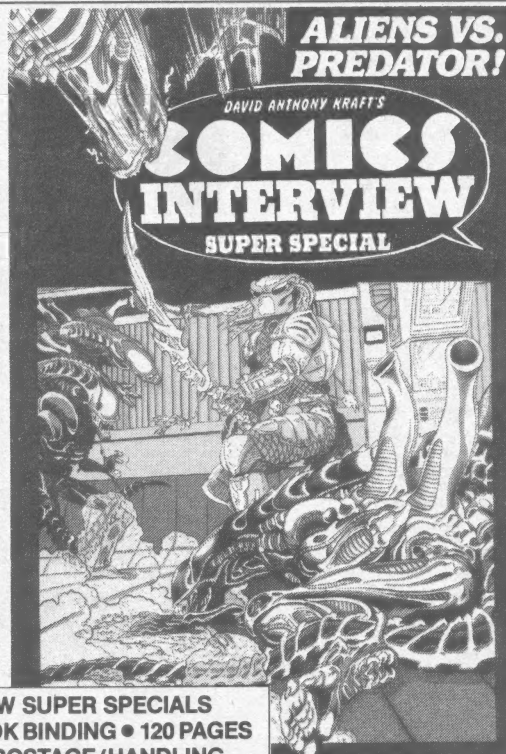
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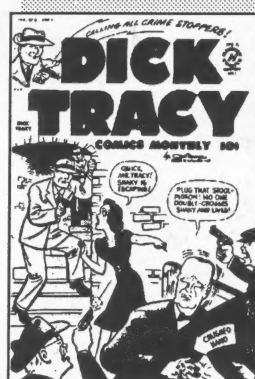
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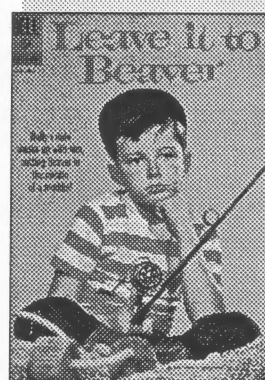
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**THE 100
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Have you ever speculated as to who really are the most powerful people in the comics industry — or, more to the point, how they rank?

In this landmark issue, COMICS INTERVIEW offers a roll call of the people who pull the strings. After hundreds of phone calls and interviews around the industry, plenty of debates among ourselves and even a little bit of lobbying by some of the people who wanted to be included — or left off — we have the list of the 100 most powerful and influential people in comics.

This isn't a popularity contest or another listing of fan favorites here. Let's face it, to make it to the top you sometimes have to step on a few toes. What put these people on our list is power. The power to make things happen — or to pull the plug.

But it takes more than merely occupying an influential position. We looked for people who don't just have potential power, but who currently *exercise* that influence in comics. Some still hold considerable sway, but are content to exercise it sporadically or ineffectively, if at all.

That's why we left some very nice people off the list, Stan Lee among them.

And there are a few people here who have a lot more respect than they do friends. These people have the power. And, for better or for worse, they're not afraid to use it.

In the end, our methodology came down to this: If you want to get something done in our field — who are you going to call? Who are today's movers and shakers in the comics industry? Who's in, who's out?

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